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# LAND TENURE AND UNEMPLOYMENT





# LAND TENURE AND UNEMPLOYMENT

BY

FRANK GEARY, B.Sc. ECON. (HONS.)

OF THE INNER TEMPLE AND THE SOUTH-EASTERN CIRCUIT,  
BARRISTER-AT-LAW

PREFACE BY

A. S. COMYNS CARR, K.C.

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TO  
MY WIFE





## PREFACE

I AM very glad to have the opportunity of contributing a few words by way of preface to this interesting study. It will be valuable to every student of the land question to have the facts—particularly as to its history—brought together so concisely and at the same time with such full documentary support. Even those who do not find themselves entirely or even at all in agreement with Mr. Geary's conclusions will, I am sure, find his book extremely stimulating.

There is a tendency nowadays among a certain school of economists and social reformers to overlook the important part which the land question plays in problems of to-day; because it is seen that in a great many cases the actual price or rent of land forms but a small proportion of the value of the property which is erected upon it there is a tendency to assume that an improvement in our land system could produce but small results. This appears to me to be a fallacy for several reasons.

In the first place all forms of wealth, when traced to their source, are products of the soil, and one should look at the toll which the ownership of land has levied upon them at every stage of production in order to form an idea of its importance. Moreover, the share which the land-owner is able to exact tends to absorb, and sometimes more than absorb, the narrow margin between profit and loss in even a substantial proportion of the enterprises which are or might be undertaken by industrious folk, while he has contributed nothing towards the success of those enterprises. It seems to me to follow that, even if that rent is only a small proportion of the total cost of production, it is just that element which forms the decisive factor in producing stagnation and unemployment. It is an interesting speculation to consider how differently

the great industrial development of this country might have worked out if it had not been preceded and accompanied by the vast enclosures of land to which Mr. Geary calls attention.

There appears to be no doubt that on the one hand agriculture conducted under the system in force under the land laws of Great Britain for many years past has failed, and still fails, to make full use of the resources of our country ; and on the other hand that the development of our industrial life and the growth of great cities have by the same laws been forced into unnatural channels with unsatisfactory results. If, moreover, we include in the land question, as undoubtedly we should do, the subject of taxation, local and Imperial, as applied to real property, we see at once an influence of a most far-reaching and sinister character upon the development of agriculture, industry, and building.

Anyone who will study Mr. Geary's book cannot fail to be convinced that here is a vast problem for solution. If it stimulates many to the further study of that problem I am sure that Mr. Geary will have rendered a valuable service.

A. S. COMYNS CARR.

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# Land Tenure and Unemployment

## PART I

### CHAPTER I

#### THE PROBLEM

Unemployment—Work a means to an end—Land, labour and capital—Land and opportunities for employment—Supply and demand with reference to Labour—Unemployment inconceivable as long as “opportunities for employment” are available—The problem: What is preventing the supply of labour from satisfying demand?

1. *Unemployment—definition. Work only a means to an end—the obtaining of wealth.*

THE greatest evil in any community is unemployment, that strange state of affairs where certain members of the population find themselves quite unable to provide for their subsistence, although they are perfectly strong and quite able and willing to work. It is the purpose of this inquiry to discover, if possible, the cause of unemployment, and to indicate the remedy.

What man really wants is not work for work's sake, but the opportunity to work as a means to an end, that end being the obtaining of the wealth that labour brings. If there are men in existence who, able and willing to work, are yet unable to procure the wealth which they need, it must be that somewhere in the circle of exchanges between goods and services, production has been prevented and has ceased. Obviously production has ceased on the part of the unemployed man, and it is equally clear that production has been restricted on the part of those who would gladly give him goods in exchange for his labour.

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### 2. *Land and labour the essential factors of production. Capital a derivative factor. Land affords opportunities for employment.*

It will be as well to see at the outset whether we can limit our inquiry as to direction, so as not to be groping blindly in the dark ; and to ensure this, we must be quite clear in the first place as to how wealth is produced.

The essential factors of production are land, which includes all the natural physical resources of the country, and labour ; and all wealth is produced by the application of labour to land. This production is brought about by adapting, changing or combining natural products to fit them for the satisfaction of human desires, by utilising the reproductive forces of Nature, and by exchanging the products of labour.

Capital is not an essential factor in the same way as land and labour are essential, for it is itself the product of labour and land—is, in fact, wealth used for a particular purpose, the production of more wealth. It is, however, a necessary factor for all but the lowest forms of production ; but the fact that it is a *derivative* factor and not a *primary* factor like land or labour must be borne in mind. All production, therefore—including both the production of wealth and the production of services—requires that labour should have access to land, some forms of production requiring land to a greater extent than others, but all requiring it nevertheless.

The land of Great Britain may thus be regarded as affording opportunities for producing wealth, opportunities for employment. Every acre is, as it were, an opportunity for producing so much wealth, varying from that land from which little can be produced to land in the City of London which provides opportunities for the production of enormous wealth.

### 3. *Supply and demand with reference to labour.*

The supply of labour may be defined as that part of the population capable of working, and the demand for labour as the aggregate demand of the whole population for commodities and services to satisfy their wants—that is, a demand not only of those who form the supply of labour, but also of the dependent members of the family. It is this demand

for goods for consumption which determines the direction of production; and human wants being unlimited in number, the total demand is always increasing.

4. *Man's labour capable of satisfying his own demands directly—access to land necessary.*

Every man, then, possesses the supply of brain and muscular energy, his labour, for satisfying his own demand for wealth, and for this reason the exchange of labour for commodities ought to present no difficulties. But labour by itself is insufficient, and can produce neither wealth nor services without access to land.

Man can thus satisfy his desires by exchanging his labour with someone who can give him the goods he wants, or by going directly to the land, producing his own subsistence, and exchanging his surplus for other goods he needs. In each case access to land is essential.

5. *Supply of labour apparently in excess of the demand—actually demand is ahead of supply.*

The continuance of widespread unemployment makes it appear as if the supply of labour must be in excess of the demand. When, for every opportunity for employment "provided," as the phrase goes, by some employer, the applicants far outnumber the men required, it really seems that there is no work for the surplus who remain unemployed—that they are, in fact, part of an excess supply.

If we consider this carefully, however, we shall see that whatever else may be wrong, it cannot be that supply is in excess of demand. While wants are *unsatisfied*, how can supply be greater than demand, and as human wants are unlimited it is difficult to see how supply could ever exceed demand. It must also be remembered that every unit of supply is also a unit of demand, and usually each unit of supply has other units of demand to supply in addition to its own.

The progress of inventions and labour-saving devices, though it may, and certainly should, lessen the amount of toil that each unit of supply need undergo in order to satisfy

the dependent units of demand, can never make the supply of labour of any unit superfluous ; for wealth only resulting from labour and land, each unit of supply must supply some labour in order to obtain the wealth it requires. It would seem, therefore, not incorrect to say that demand is always in excess or ahead of supply.

6. *No shortage of capital. Capital the product of labour and land.*

Is there, then, a shortage of capital ? Can we say that it is an insufficiency of capital that causes unemployment, that makes men unable to obtain the wealth they want, or to produce from the land for themselves ? Obviously no, when everywhere we see idle capital as well as idle labour. But even if there were a shortage of capital, this would soon be made good, for capital itself is a product of land and labour. It is for this reason that capital cannot limit *industry*, but only the *form* of industry, and not even this for long, where there is the opportunity for producing more capital, and security afforded for its growth.

7. *Unemployment inconceivable as long as "opportunities for employment" are available.*

If, then, the supply of labour is sufficient and not in excess of the demand, and if there is also ample capital, there is only one other factor of production to look to, namely, *land*. Is there sufficient land in this country, or are men without the goods they so urgently require, because there is insufficient land from which their labour might produce wealth ? This, it seems to us, must be the crux of the whole question ; for if there is insufficient land this would explain why the supply of labour could not produce wealth directly to meet its own demand and the demand of others.

In considering this question it will be necessary to understand exactly the meaning of *sufficient* land. It will not be enough to show that there is a sufficient area of land, for that done it will be necessary to proceed farther and inquire whether this land is easily accessible to labour for the production of wealth. Though the actual area of land be sufficient, yet if it is not available to labour for the drawing forth of



wealth, for all practical purposes it might as well be non-existent.

Land, as we have said, is Nature's provision of "opportunities for employment," or what is the same thing, "opportunities for producing wealth," and it seems quite clear, therefore, that as long as there are any such opportunities available, what we know as unemployment would be inconceivable.

*8. Something preventing supply of labour from satisfying demand. If area of land sufficient, what is obstacle preventing the access of labour ?*

We now arrive at this point, that if the supply of labour is not in excess of the demand, and yet there are men who lack the goods they want, the reason must be that the supply of labour is in some way prevented from satisfying demand ; and this can mean either that those in employment are unable to produce (or obtain) sufficient to enable them to satisfy their demands, and so have no use for the labour of others, or that those unemployed are unable to go to Nature—to the land—and produce wealth directly for themselves. In either case it must be that there is insufficient land or that labour is denied access to the land.

Our inquiry must, then, be directed towards ascertaining whether there is a sufficient area of land in this country to provide opportunities for employment for those who need the results of labour ; and if we arrive at the conclusion that there is—and there will be little doubt that this must be the conclusion—we shall have to see what is the nature of the obstacle preventing labour from getting to the land to produce wealth to satisfy its wants—i.e. what it is that is preventing the supply of labour from meeting and satisfying the demand for labour.

*9. Historical inquiry into the relation between land tenure and employment.*

We shall pursue this inquiry on historical lines by investigating from before the Conquest until the present day the relations existing at various times between employment and

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the availability of land. "Availability" of land, once we have seen that the area is sufficient, must depend on the method by which that land is held or on the system of tenure obtaining at any particular period. We shall also endeavour to show the actual extent of the opportunities for employment afforded by the land of this country.

By such an inquiry we hope to be able to point to the cause of unemployment, to show if possible how it originated, and also to indicate the remedy.

## CHAPTER II

### SAXON ENGLAND—LAND TENURE AND EMPLOYMENT

Saxon village communities—Folkland and Bookland; the lordship of the community—The free and unfree vill; commendation—Anomaly of landless and lordless men—Access to land—Employment for all.

#### 1. *Village communities with much arable land.*

IN order to understand the economy of Saxon England in the years immediately preceding the Conquest, we must picture to ourselves a land of vills or village communities, each of which was self-sufficing save for a few commodities such as iron and salt. Each of these vills had a very large area of arable as compared with grass or meadow lands, and was usually separated from others by more or less extensive stretches of waste and unappropriated land, which was often dense forest. The arable land stretched away from the village in two or three great open fields, one of which lay fallow, and the various holdings of the peasants lay scattered in acre and half-acre strips throughout these fields. Each house was usually surrounded by a small enclosure, and there were often small consolidated holdings of a few acres scattered round the fields. Ploughing was done co-operatively and the meadow-land was open, except at hay harvest. The waste was used as common rough pasture.

From Domesday Book, 1086, we learn that the vills were most thickly populated in the east, south-east, and east Midlands, and that population diminished towards the west. Some few of the royal vills possessed 100 families and more, but the average was much less. The Hundred of Armingford, in Cambridgeshire, had approximately 32 families per vill, while Cornwall often had only 5 or 6 families.<sup>1</sup> Domesday

<sup>1</sup> Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*.

records some 25,000 servi or serfs, and the number of these in each vill increases from east to west, many vills in Cornwall and the west consisting of half slaves. The free members of the community varied from sokemen to cotters, according to status, etc., the thane corresponding to some extent with the lord of Norman times. The normal holding of a free household was probably the hide of 120 acres.

## 2. *The lordship of the community. Folkland and Bookland.*

All land was either "folkland" or "bookland," but it is not at all clear exactly what these terms meant. According to Maitland, "bookland is land held by book, by a royal and ecclesiastical *privilegium*. Folkland is land held without book, by unwritten title, by the folk-law."<sup>1</sup> He also states that "bookland" was only held by churches and very great men, and that ordinary freemen certainly did not have "books" or charters; also that the term "folkland" meant that the folk or community owned "a superiority or seigniority over land," and land held by "book" by a church might be held as "folkland" by the freemen cultivating it.

Grants out of the "folkland" by "book" could only be made by the King with the consent of his Witan as representatives of the whole community. But even in the case of such a grant the community did not lose all control over the "bookland," for if the terms of the "book" were not kept, the community might resume control. Also the land was not granted out and out free of all services and dues to the community. King Alfred, in his *Blossom Gatherings out of St. Augustine*, speaks of a settler on loan-land hoping to obtain some day "bookland" and "permanent inheritance." This may mean that "bookland" was not unknown among small peasants, or that settled and occupied land with permanent inheritance became known as "bookland," although no actual "book" or charter was in existence. Bede also referred to "folkland" as the common stock from which grants might be made.

Whatever, therefore, may have been the exact meaning of these terms, it seems clear that the unoccupied and unappropriated land of the country was called "folkland,"

<sup>1</sup> Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*, p. 257.

and that when such land became "bookland" the chief characteristics of "folkland" usually still adhered to it—that is, the "seignory or lordship" of the community remained. The term "folkland" would seem to have arisen from the fact that the land of each province belonged originally and ultimately to the folk of that province, and that although permanent inheritance might be granted in this land, either with or without a "book," to an individual or to a community, yet the community as a whole retained the absolute ownership.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the Saxon period "folkland" had come to be known as the "King's folkland," probably because the King, as head of the community, shared with the community their rights in the land.

### 3. *The free and unfree vill. Commendation.*

Vills were of two kinds, the lordless or free vill and the vill dominated by a thane. These free vills, where the peasants were free to leave or to sell their land when they liked, predominated in the counties of the Danelaw, and as half the then population of England was within these counties, it will be seen that the free and lordless village community was by no means the exception. As Maitland says: "Any theory of English history must face the free, the lordless village, and must account for it as for one of the normal phenomena which existed in the year of grace 1066. . . . We have before us villages which, taken as wholes, have no lords." <sup>2</sup>

As regards the vills dominated by a thane or lord, this great man was not originally the landlord of the vill, but more nearly resembled the highland chieftain, who was chief or lord of his clan, but not the owner of the land occupied by the clan. The lord was the protector of the community, who had surrendered a part of their freedom to him in return for his help, a practice known as "commendation." This did not give the lord any rights of ownership over the arable land of the vill outside his own demesne, but only to the dues paid by the cultivators in return for his protection. This relation of chief and man was, however, gradually becoming a relation of landlord and tenant, and as this change came

<sup>1</sup> See also Pollock, *The Land Laws*.

<sup>2</sup> Maitland, *Domesday*, p. 141.

about, the waste or unoccupied land of the village community came to be known as the "lord's waste," not meaning that it was the absolute property of the lord, but that he, in common with the rest of the vill, had rights over it. In referring to the rights of the village community over this waste land as affected by the Statute of Merton, Digby says: "It is worthy of observation that the rights of common here contemplated must have rested on ancient custom; it could not have been supposed by the framers of this statute that the right had at some former date been granted by the lord according to the theory of later lawyers."<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. *Landless and lordless men anomalies.*

Every man in the Saxon village community—and the town was only a large village—depended wholly or in great part for his livelihood on work on the land. The landless man or the lordless man was an anomaly in the Saxon economy. The landless consisted of followers and serfs, and the follower was a freeman who might become a holder of land. After a year's satisfactory service he was allotted 2 acres of land, one of which was sown, and he might better his position, for, according to the *R.S.P.*,<sup>2</sup> "if he earn more let it be to his own advantage." The lordless man, too, was regarded as an outlaw, one whom "no law can reach," but there would seem to be no reason why the law should not reach a lordless man provided he had land, and so the early laws dealing with these men are plainly directed against the landless man in particular, and the lordless man because he is also a landless man. The landless man who was without a lord was regarded as a wastrel or criminal, and rightly so, for his position was an unnecessary one. Æthelstan's laws deal with these men as follows: "And we have ordained respecting those lordless men, respecting such an one as no law can reach, that the kindred be commanded to appoint a home for him according to 'folchriht,' and to find a lord for him in the folk-moot; and if they will not or cannot produce him at the day appointed, then let him be henceforth a 'flyma,' and let whoever can come at him slay him as a thief." And again: "And we have

<sup>1</sup> Digby, *An Introduction to the History of the Law of Real Property.*

<sup>2</sup> *Rectitudines Singularum Personarum.*

ordained if any landless man shall become a follower in another 'shire' and again seek his kindred, that they shall harbour him only on the consideration that if he do evil there they will present him to 'folchriht' or do bot for him."

#### 5. *Access to land. New Settlements.*

Cultivators and settlers were in demand in Saxon times and for many years after, and the demand furnished by the thanes' need for help on the demesne, and the opportunities afforded by the unoccupied land of the vill, were far greater than the supply of labour. King Alfred<sup>1</sup> has described to us how a new settlement was begun, and pictures a man building a cottage on "loan-land," cultivating the land and employing himself in fowling and fishing, in the hope that after a time he would be allowed to hold it as "bookland." New vills or hams were started in clearings in forests or on waste land, and a grant of the "folk-land" would be made to the new community. Sometimes these settlements consisted of a single household, and often, in the west country especially, did not exceed four or six families.<sup>2</sup> New fields and holdings were from time to time carved out of the unoccupied land adjoining the open fields, and the thane frequently provided new settlers with an outfit. The *R.S.P.* speaks of the gebur as receiving 2 oxen, 1 cow, 6 sheep, and 7 acres of his usual holding of 30 acres ready sown, together with agricultural implements and household utensils and the first year free of the usual services. In Wales, too, every freeman received 5 acres, with hunting rights and rights over the waste, and the unfree were not without land and cattle of their own.<sup>3</sup> Land was easily transferable in Saxon England. It could be devised by will and possessory rights could be sold.

#### 6. *No lack of work. Land for all.*

It has been seen that landless men, and especially landless men who were not under the protection of a lord, were anomalies in Saxon times, and the law compelled such a landless man

<sup>1</sup> *Blossom Gatherings.*

<sup>2</sup> *Domesday Book.*

<sup>3</sup> Seebohm, *English Village Community.*

to get him a lord, which was probably the surest way of getting him settled on the land. No man need be without land, and all were able to live in rude plenty from the produce of their farms, forests and fish-ponds. There were no freemen who had to depend for their living on work offered by an employer, for the land was open to all and new settlers were welcomed; even the serfs, who were not very numerous, were able to accumulate some property of their own, and in many cases farmed small holdings of land.

Poor there probably were through lack of diligence or infirmity, but the latter at any rate would be looked after by their families or assisted by the Church out of the abundance of the food produced. But paupers, able-bodied men unable to obtain work, we do not hear of, for the simple reason that they did not exist, and it will be readily seen could not exist in Saxon England.



## CHAPTER III

### DOMESDAY BOOK STATISTICS—NEW THEORY OF TENURE

Domesday Book and the Manor—New theory of tenure ; no land without a lord—Population and arable land—Cattle and pigs—Effects of the Conquest—Employment and security of tenure.

#### 1. *Domesday Book—its information. The Manor.*

THE great inquest of 1086, known as the Domesday Book, was, in fact, the first Royal Commission in this country to inquire into and report on the size and value of agricultural holdings, number and status of the cultivators, and numbers of cattle, etc., both as they were in 1066, in the time of Edward the Confessor, and as the Commissioners themselves found them under the Feudal System of William. This Report supplies us with a great deal of useful information, statistical and otherwise, which will help us considerably as we proceed with our inquiry.

We are introduced for the first time to the manor, which was a taxable unit, and although it is not clear exactly what the Domesday manor comprised, it coincided sufficiently often with the Saxon vill to enable us to refer to the Norman village community as a manor. The place of the thane is now taken by the Norman lord, and often the thane has been degraded to the status of a villein. We also find many former free tenants holding by unfree services. The villein of Domesday corresponds in some respects to the gebur of Saxon times, but he was unfree in the sense that his services and dues were far more exacting than anything paid before 1066. The normal holding of the villein was about 30 acres of arable land in the common fields, and he held this at the will<sup>1</sup> of his lord. Villeins made up about 38 % of the recorded popula-

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter IV, par. 11, and Chapter VIII, pars. 12, 13.

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tion, and the borders and cotters about 32 %. Serfs are recorded to the number of 25,000, but the number of these had diminished since 1066, especially in the eastern counties and in Essex. In most cases the lordless vills have been provided with Norman lords.

### 2. *New theory of tenure.*

Before considering some of the statistics furnished by Domesday Book it will be as well to notice the new theories of land-ownership introduced with the Conquest. We no longer hear of "folkland," for this has become *terra regis*, the "King's land," his absolute property, and the manor, including the unoccupied waste land within its limits, has come to be regarded as the property of the lord of the manor, held of the King, it is true, but nevertheless subject to the rendering of certain services, for all practical purposes his land. "And the Domesday description, let us repeat, shows that all these claims were advanced on the morrow of the Conquest and went with the Conquest settlement." "The legal theory of the feudal state treats them (the rights of the several dwellers and cultivators of the locality) as derived from a private and exclusive ownership of the lord. The lord's ownership itself may be considered as a dependent tenure and traced ultimately to a grant of the King as eminent owner of the whole land of the country." <sup>1</sup>

### 3. *No land without a lord.*

"No land without a lord" was the principle which necessarily followed from these new theories of tenure, and the idea of land being owned by the community as distinct from the King and the lords had no place in the Norman Feudal System. The small tenants of the manors each looked to a superior lord, who had also become now for most purposes a landlord. This new theory, however, was one which would not be likely to show itself as revolutionary or dangerous all at once, especially if the King insisted on the lords rendering all the services which they owed in respect of their land. For the King to share with the whole community the rights

<sup>1</sup> Vinogradoff, *The Growth of the Manor*.

over the land was a very different state of affairs from the King being owner of the land without any reference to the community. Similarly, for the Saxon thane to have recognized rights over the waste in common with the other cultivators of the vill was very different from the lord being the owner of the waste and unoccupied land, who of his grace permitted the villagers to have certain rights of common over his land.

**4. *Population and cultivation. A vast area of arable land.***

The information given by Domesday Book is confined chiefly to England south of Yorkshire and Cheshire. If we reckon the recorded men as heads of families and multiply these by five we get a population of 1,375,000.<sup>1</sup> There are 75,000 teams recorded, and allowing 120 acres to each, we arrive at a total of some 9,000,000 acres of arable land. We obtain much the same result from the number of hides at 120 acres each. The hide was 120 acres of arable land, and included in addition sufficient pasture and waste to provide for the animals kept on such a holding. This is an enormous extent of arable land, and when we come to analyse county by county we find that often more than half the county area was under the plough, and frequently the arable land was considerably more than it is to-day, and this with a population of one and a half millions or less. We shall have more of these comparisons to make in a later chapter, but to give two examples now: The area of Buckinghamshire is now 477,308 acres and that of Sussex 928,735 acres. Domesday Book gives 269,000 acres of arable for Buckinghamshire and 371,000 for Sussex. The area of arable in Buckinghamshire in 1924<sup>2</sup> was 119,829 acres and in Sussex 217,916 acres.

**5. *Arable not in excess of requirements.***

By way of corroborating these calculations, based on the team and the hide, Maitland shows that the acreage of arable land arrived at would not be too great for the satisfaction of wants at that time. He estimates that out of the 9,000,000 acres, 5,000,000 would be sown annually, and as the English

<sup>1</sup> See Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*.

<sup>2</sup> Agricultural Statistics, 1924.

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were great drinkers of barley beer, a third of this must be deducted for beer-land, on which barley and oats would be grown. This leaves little more than 2 acres per head of population, without taking into account the animals that have to be fed; and even leaving 2 acres for each person and reckoning 4 bushels per acre (produce 6 bushels per acre and 2 bushels allowed for seed—a high estimate), we are only allowing 1 quarter of grain each, and this is none too much.

“In the twelfth century the corn-rents paid to the Bishop of Durham often comprised malt, wheat and oats in equal quantities. In the next century the economy of the canons of St. Paul’s was so arranged that for every 30 quarters of wheat that went to make bread, 7 quarters of wheat, 7 of barley, and 32 of oats went to make beer. The weekly allowance of every canon included 30 gallons.”<sup>1</sup>

### 6. *Cattle and pigs.*

Domesday records 600,000 beasts of the plough, exclusive of bulls, cows and calves, which would make a considerable addition to this number. Fleeces were required for clothing, and according to Maitland, “if we look only at the flocks which belong to the holders of manors, we may have to feed a million sheep south of the Humber.” Very large numbers of sheep also were kept in Norfolk and Suffolk and on the dairy farms of Essex. Meadow-land was very scarce at this time and was greatly in demand, and its relative scarceness as compared with arable land may be gathered from the fact that it was usually two or three times the value of arable land.

Bacon bulked largely in the food of the peasant, and the number of pigs kept must have been very large. “Before we have gone through a tenth of the account of Essex we have read of ‘wood for’ near 10,000 pigs. If the woods were full, and this rate were maintained throughout the country, the swine of England would be as numerous T.R.W. as they are now. . . . This mode of reckoning the capacity of woodland would only occur to men who were accustomed to see large herds.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 443.

**7. *The effects of the Conquest. Labour in demand and tenure secure.***

The results of the Norman Conquest gathered from Domesday Book show us that the Conquest was a bad thing for the English peasants. It was not only that thanes were replaced by Norman lords, and Norman lords appeared where there was no thane or lord before, or that dues were increased and freemen degraded in status, but the new theory of land tenure, which regarded the King as the absolute owner of the soil of the country, and the lords as practical owners under him of all the land, both occupied and waste, of their manors, boded ill for the future. As long as the lords had no special reasons for interfering with the peasants' rights over the waste of the manors, these rights were allowed to go on, subject to payment of dues for the privilege of exercising them. But we shall see later the effect of the new theory when the peasants' rights of common clashed with the lords' private interests.

Maitland has no doubts as to the effect of the Conquest. He writes: "We are not left to speculate about the matter. In after days those who were likely to hold a true tradition, the great financier of the twelfth, the great lawyer of the thirteenth century, believed that there had been a catastrophe. As a result of the Conquest, the peasants—at all events some of the peasants—had fallen from their free estate; freemen, holding freely, they had been compelled to do unfree services. But if we need not rely upon speculation, neither need we rely upon tradition. Domesday Book is full of evidence that the titles of the soil are being depressed." He then gives as an example the rural population of Cambridgeshire as recorded in 1086. This shows:

Sokemen	..	..	..	..	213
Villeins ..	..	..	..	..	1,902
Borders	..	..	..	..	1,428
Cotters ..	..	..	..	..	736
Serfs ..	..	..	..	..	548

But when we look at the figures for the same county in the time of Edward the Confessor, we find that there were then at least 900 sokemen.

Apart, however, from the effects of the Conquest, such

as the oppressive dues and the degradation of the peasants, there was no great change in the rural economy of England. Labour was still valuable and the demand for it exceeded the supply, and although many peasants held at the will of the lord, their tenure was in fact secure, and by the law of the land they could not be removed as long as they paid their dues. "Those who cultivate the land ought not to be harassed beyond their proper fixed amount ; nor is it lawful for the lords to remove the cultivators from the land so long as they are able to render the due service " (Laws of William the Conqueror XXIX.)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thorpe, *Ancient Laws and Institutes*, p. 480.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE NORMAN MANOR—ORIGIN OF RIGHTS OF COMMON

The Norman manor—Distribution of land—Common rights—Assarting and subinfeudation—Approvement of the waste—Statutes of Merton and Westminster—Origin of rights of common—Approvement and Norman theory of tenure—Labour in great demand—Copyhold tenure and security—The peasant and the distribution of wealth—Real wages high—Population largely rural—Town-dwellers—Opportunities for employment exceed supply of labour.

#### 1. *The Norman Manor. Distribution of land.*

WE shall deal in this chapter with the growth of the manor and the condition of employment in England from Domesday to the time of the Black Death in 1348.

Cultivation on the manors was carried on on the two- or three-field system, and the former probably predominated during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> The lord's demesne or home farm consisted chiefly of strips scattered about the open fields, and was tilled by the services of the villeins, cotters and serfs, who rendered so many days' service per week in return for their holdings. The villeins were the most numerous class of landholders and the freeholders the smallest. The normal holding of the villein was still about 30 acres, and below these came the cotters and serfs, who held plots varying in size up to about 5 acres. The holders of such plots would put in a good deal of work on the lord's demesne. By the end of the twelfth century the serfs had risen from the state of actual slavery, and were generally in possession of plots similar to those held by cotters.

Part of the lord's demesne was often leased out in plots called "forlands," which were farmed in severalty by artisans or by ploughmen and other servants, who had received such

<sup>1</sup> Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*.

plots as payment for their services. Such enclosed plots, too, were often found on the outskirts of the open fields.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. *Common rights—appendant and appurtenant. Their value.*

The interest of the tenants of the manor in the land did not cease with their holdings of arable land, for they enjoyed many rights of "common," a term which is itself significant when we come to consider the origin of these rights. There were three main divisions of rights of common :

- (a) Right of pasture on the waste ;
- (b) Right of pasture on the meadow-land ;
- (c) Right of common over the open arable fields after harvest.

There were other valuable customary rights, such as common of estovers for cutting wood, gorse and fern ; common of turbary for cutting turf for fuel ; pannage, or the right of feeding swine in the woods ; and house-bote, which permitted the cutting of material for the construction of houses.<sup>2</sup>

The right of common of pasture for beasts of husbandry over the waste attached to every holding of a freeholder in the manor as of right, and came to be known as common appendant ; other rights of common enjoyed in respect of holdings were known as common appurtenant. Strangers who had "squatted" on the waste appear to have acquired rights of common, and there was common by way of vicinage over the wastes of adjoining manors. Grants of sites for houses were usually made by the homage, or the whole body of villagers. "These rights supply the means or the conditions whereby the ploughing, manuring, and other agricultural acts are carried on. Further, they furnish in large measure the meat which is eaten, the wool which is woven, the wood required, and the fuel for heat and cooking in the homestead."<sup>3</sup>

## 3. *Development of the manor—assarting, subinfeudation.*

With the development of the manor new holdings came into being. Squatters often appeared on the waste, and new

<sup>1</sup> Vinogradoff, *Growth of the Manor*.

<sup>2</sup> Gonner, *Common Land and Inclosures*.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



villages would be started in clearings in the waste or forest land. Land reclaimed from the waste was sometimes added to the open fields or enclosed and added to the lord's demesne, and small plots were frequently enclosed from the waste and rented by the lord.<sup>1</sup> These plots were usually held by tradesmen,<sup>2</sup> but might be taken by villeins in addition to their customary holdings, or by the sons of villeins, for there was no subdivision of the villein's holding at death, the land usually going to the youngest son.<sup>3</sup>

This policy of taking in and fencing off plots of the waste was known as "assarting," and was done with the consent of the freeholders of the manor or in some manors with the consent of the homage. It will be seen that all land so enclosed diminished to some extent the common pasture of the manor, but as long as these encroachments on the waste did not seriously affect pasture rights there would be little opposition. The meadow-land, being very scarce and precious, was not allowed to be enclosed for several cultivation.<sup>4</sup>

Up to the time of the Statute of Quia Emptores, 1290, it was the custom, as manors grew large, for the lord of the manor to create smaller manors to be held by freehold tenants under him.<sup>5</sup> This had the effect of withdrawing more of the waste from common pasture, and was the source of disputes as to whether the new manors had rights of pasture over the whole of the original waste or over part only.

#### 4. *Approvement of the waste.*

In addition to the foregoing methods of dealing with the unoccupied land of the manor the lord frequently, and without the consent of the freeholders, made grants of portions of the waste to be enclosed and held in severalty either for arable or sheep-farming. This process was called "approvement" (Latin, *appropriare* = to appropriate), and in time this seems to have become synonymous with "improvement," so that the "approvements" or appropriations of the lord came to be spoken of as "improvements." We read in the anonymous

<sup>1</sup> Ashley, *Econ. Hist.*, bk. i, ch. i.

<sup>2</sup> Garnier, *Annals of the British Peasantry*.

<sup>3</sup> Vinogradoff, *Villainage in England*.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, *The Growth of the Manor*, p. 173.

<sup>5</sup> Subinfeudation.

*Seneschaucie*<sup>1</sup> a writing of the latter part of the twelfth or the beginning of the thirteenth century, that "the lord ought to inquire by his own men and others on his manors as many as there are, about his seneschal and his doings, and the approvments he has made since his coming."

The increasing exercise on the part of the lord of this right of approver seems to have aroused the antagonism of the tenants of the manor, as was only to be expected; and this hostility to what was regarded as an encroachment by the lord on communal rights of pasture must have reached such a pitch as to make it difficult for the lord to continue the process, for in 1236 was passed the Statute of Merton, the first Enclosure Act.

### 5. *The Statute of Merton changes the common law.*

By this statute it was enacted that lords of manors might approve or enclose the waste of their manors providing they left the freeholders "as much pasture as sufficeth to their tenements, and that they have free egress and regress from their tenement unto the pasture."<sup>2</sup> Thus legal sanction was given to the encroachments of the lord on the rights of pasture attached to the freeholders' tenements, and although the freeholders still had the remedy of the assize of novel disseisin, yet the onus was put upon them of showing, if they objected to the approvment, that it left them with insufficient pasture or affected their ingress or egress. This statute did not apply to common rights enjoyed by persons not tenants of the manor or to common appurtenant.

It seems clear that before the Statute of Merton the lord had no right to approve as against the freeholder and so deprive him of his common law right without his consent, and that in so far as the statute gave the lord this right it altered the common law of the realm. This view was held by Bracton, a judge living at the time the statute was passed.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Trans. R. Hist. Soc.*, 1890.

<sup>2</sup> Statute of Merton, 1236.

<sup>3</sup> Br., lib. iv, cap. 38, fol. 237: "Et unde in hoc casu si dominus soli et proprietatis sibi velit aliquid appropriare et includere, hoc facere non poterit sine voluntate et licentia prædictorum, et, si fecerit, per assisam recuperabunt."

## 6. *Statute of Westminster II and common appurtenant.*

In 1285 was passed the Statute of Westminster II, which extended the application of the Statute of Merton to common appurtenant, which included common of pasture enjoyed by those outside the manor who were not tenants of the lord.<sup>1</sup> Advantage was taken of these statutes by lord of manors to increase greatly the frequency and amount of their approvals, and it is certain that "sufficiency of pasture" would be interpreted differently by the lord and the commoner. But the commoners at this period were not downtrodden slaves and did not shrink from asserting their rights against the lord, or if need be of demolishing enclosures on the waste.

Two examples of approvals at this time may be quoted. In the reign of Edward I the Earl of Warenne was permitted to enclose for colonizing purposes some 40,000 acres of waste land.<sup>2</sup> In 1313 we have an example of approval on a smaller scale by deed. By this deed the lord makes a grant of 40 acres of the waste to be enclosed, and binds himself in a bond for 50 marks to indemnify the grantee should any commoner break down the enclosure on the ground that insufficient pasture had been left.<sup>3</sup>

## 7. *Origin of rights of common. The lord encroaches on communal rights.*

Much controversy has raged around the question as to the origin of rights of common, one theory holding that these rights originated from the time when the community owned the land, and the right of common was the right of each shareholder in the village community to a share of the common property. The other theory maintains that rights of common resulted from grants from a lord or from encroachments by the tenants on the lord's waste. The former view, however, seems to be the sounder, both historically and legally, and is supported by strong evidence.

<sup>1</sup> "It is ordained that the Statute of Merton, provided between the lord and his tenants, from henceforth shall hold place between lords of wastes, woods and pastures and their neighbours, having sufficient pasture to their tenants and neighbours, so that the lords of such wastes, woods and pastures may make approval of the residue, and this shall be observed for such as claim pasture as appurtenant to their tenements."

<sup>2</sup> Vinogradoff, *The Growth of the Manor*, p. 330.

<sup>3</sup> *Arch. Journal*, XXIX, 1872 (86).

With reference to common rights Vinogradoff says: "Behind the minimum standard contemplated by the Statute of Merton lay a body of custom devised by the ordinary routine in the management of the common, and this ordinary routine applied quite as much to the tenants in villeinage as to the freeholders, and must have applied even more uniformly to the ceorls of a Saxon *tún*." <sup>1</sup> Also: "The notion of the lord's private right ran counter to all notions of communal property, which were bound up with ancient usages as to the waste." <sup>2</sup>

That the lord's approvements were encroachments on communal rights would seem to be substantiated by the use of the term "common" land as applied to the waste, and by the opposition—and often successful opposition—of the villagers to the lord's approvements; and the Statute of Westminster II, dealing with rights of common appurtenant to the holdings of those who were not the tenants of the lord of the manor, negatives the idea that those rights had originated in grants from the lord or were encroachments on his rights. The statute shows, in fact, that these rights of common rested on ancient custom, and the tradition of the villagers and the opinion of a contemporary lawyer <sup>3</sup> support this.

### 8. *The presumption of a lost grant. Lord Hatherley and Pollock.*

In Bracton's time a servitude such as a right of common appurtenant could be acquired by long and peaceful user, but later such long and peaceful user came only to be recognised as evidence that a lord had originally made a grant and that this grant had been lost. And it is because inhabitants as such could not take by grant that rights of common claimed by inhabitants as such have been held to be invalid, in spite of the fact that they may have been so enjoyed from time immemorial. Such rights were recognized up to the time of Elizabeth,<sup>4</sup> but it was decided in Gateward's case <sup>5</sup> in 1606 that such claims were invalid.

Lord Chancellor Hatherley in 1871 said that it was the duty of the court to presume a lost grant to validate a right

<sup>1</sup> *The Growth of the Manor*, p. 172.

<sup>3</sup> Bracton.

<sup>4</sup> 43 Eliz., cap. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 308.

<sup>5</sup> 6 Coke's Reps. 59b.

of common enjoyed for a long period, and his remarks in the case of *Warwick v. Queen's College, Oxford*,<sup>1</sup> are interesting :

"This brings me to what has really been the difficulty in the case, which I have anxiously considered, to see whether it could or could not be overcome, it being the duty of the court to seek a way of overcoming it, by finding, if possible, the legal origin of the right. I rather think that the difficulty arises from our somewhat artificial system of law. I am not, of course, venturing to overrule or shake any of the established authorities, but the real difficulty is this : In ancient records traces are to be found of customs (prevalent anterior, I think, to our feudal history, and belonging to a period of greater freedom), such as having lammas-field—that is, fields which are used during a certain portion of the year by all the tenants of the manor and during a certain other time are lying waste."

Pollock also supports this view with reference to the rights of villeins : "It would be nearer the truth to say that by a long series of encroachments and fictions the lords, and lawyers acting in the interest of the lords, got people to believe that the lord's will was the origin of those ancient customary rights which before were absolute." <sup>2</sup>

### 9. *Approvements increase—to what extent harmful.*

Apart from the controversy as to the origin of these rights of common, the important matter is the fact of their enjoyment, and it will now be seen how the Norman theory of tenure adversely affected the interests of the villagers and their enjoyment of these rights. There is also ample evidence that advantage was taken of the two enclosing statutes, and the manorial records show that enclosures on the waste increased as time went on.

Approvements of the waste, in so far as they provided plots for additional tenants or additional land for existing tenants, certainly enabled these men to earn a living and put the land to a good use ; and great colonizing approvements, such as that taken in hand by the Earl of Warenne, must have opened up further opportunities of employment for the increasing population of the manors. We have no evidence of approvements for game preserves, nor do we hear of any

<sup>1</sup> L.R., Ch. App., vol. vi., 1870-71 (720).

<sup>2</sup> *The Land Laws.*

damage being done to crops by game,<sup>1</sup> and it is quite certain that no lord would approve land and hold it out of use. But when portions of the waste were enclosed for sheep-walks, the small amount of labour required made the approvement far less useful than it otherwise would have been. It is also important to realize that in the case of most of these approvements the land was fenced in, and so the rights of all forms of common to the extent of the enclosure were diminished for all time.

#### 10. *Labour in great demand. Little oppression.*

Although approvement progressively increased during the period under review, the amount of waste enclosed was not so great as seriously to affect the rights of the commoners or to lessen the opportunities for employment on the manors. During this period and for many years after men were of far greater value than the land on which they worked, and the value of a manor was represented largely by the number of villagers residing and working there. It is for this reason that there could not have been any great oppression of the villagers at this time, and, indeed, we hear little of it. Labour was too precious to drive away, and many regulations existed for preventing the villeins from leaving the manor for the towns or from apprenticing their children.

#### 11. *Copyhold tenure. The villeins' security.*

Many villeins and other smaller tenants of the manors developed during this period into copyholders. The incidents of their tenure were determined by the *custom of the particular manor*,<sup>2</sup> and although their tenure was in theory "at the will of the lord," this was certainly not interpreted to mean that the lord could eject the villein or copyholder at a moment's notice. The custom of the manor and the general feeling of the village community would ensure that, subject to paying heriots and in some cases fines on the admission of a new tenant, the villeins' tenure was absolutely secure. It may be noted here that in 1369 the court held<sup>3</sup> that it was lawful

<sup>1</sup> Thorold Rogers, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter VIII, pars. 12 and 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Year Book*, 42 Edward III, 25, pl. 9.

for a lord to eject a copyholder who had not rendered the customary services, thus implying that it would have been unlawful if he had rendered his services ; and in 1468 <sup>1</sup> it was finally established that if a copyholder were wrongly ejected he might maintain an action for trespass against his lord.

12. *Condition of the peasant prior to the Black Death. Wealth plentiful and well distributed.*

Although, then, by the fourteenth century the peasant was not in such a favourable position as in Saxon times,<sup>2</sup> there was as yet little to complain of. Food was plentiful for all, and pigs and poultry would seem to have figured largely in the villager's diet. There were certainly bad harvests and scarcity at times, but, according to Thorold Rogers, there was only one period of actual famine in the whole economic history of this country, and that was from 1315 to 1321. He adds, too, that even during this period no agrarian robberies are recorded or any thefts of live-stock, apart from those committed by the marauding bands that often toured the country-side.<sup>3</sup> We have seen how all the villagers had comparative security, and even the smallest cultivators were able to save and increase the size of their holdings. Wealth was well distributed, the great mass of the people being assured a comfortable living.<sup>4</sup> As there were opportunities for all to produce their own subsistence, and as labour was valuable, the supply falling short of the demand, there was a limit to what some could make at the expense of others. The position is well summed up by Thorold Rogers : " They ate wheaten bread, drank barley beer, and had plenty of cheap, though perhaps coarse, meat. . . . The grinding, hopeless poverty under which existence may be just continued, but when nothing is won beyond bare existence, did not, I am convinced, characterize or even belong to mediæval life. That men died from want I can believe, but I do not think they lived and died by inches, so to speak." <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Year Book*, 7 Edward IV, 18, pl. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Vinogradoff, *Villeinage in England*, p. 298.

<sup>3</sup> Thorold Rogers, p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>5</sup> *Six Centuries, etc.*, p. 415.

13. *Real Wages high. Most people associated with agriculture.*

It is also evident from the results of the researches of Thorold Rogers as to prices and wages that food prices were low at this time and real wages high, and we have seen how villeins and cotters were able to accumulate savings and increase the size of their holdings. Landless agricultural labourers as we now know them did not exist, and there was therefore no sharp dividing-line between farmers and labourers. He who cultivated the smallest area earned sufficient to live in rude comfort, and he had security. There would also appear to be very few people who were not concerned to some extent with agriculture,<sup>1</sup> for craftsmen and artisans living in towns usually went to the country for the harvest, and the King, in dismissing his Parliament, sent his "Commons to the harvest."

14. *Landless inhabitants of towns. Employment regular—the building trade.*

The rise of a distinct artisan class in the villages is noticed in the thirteenth century,<sup>2</sup> and most of these would possess plots of land. In the towns there were landless craftsmen and servants of various kinds, whose numbers were probably supplemented from time to time by absconding serfs and the sons of villeins. The population of towns was under 200,000, and, according to Rogers, the town population to rural population was as 1 to 12·34. But many of these towns were only like large villages, and the number of those who had no interest in land cultivation was small. Nothing is heard of unemployment, and in the case of town artisans, if work were discontinued for a time, there was always work to be done on the fields of the manor.

Employment was regular, as there was no violent fluctuation in the demand for artisans' products. Every man had an opportunity of producing his own subsistence, and consequently his demand was effective and regular; and in trades such as building, where work could not always be continuous, it seems that wages were high enough to allow for all gaps. This

<sup>1</sup> Thorold Rogers, p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> Ashley, *Econ. Hist.*, bk. i.



industry is specially noted by Thorold Rogers <sup>1</sup> on account of the remarkably low cost of the finished product. Even when the prices of material and labour are brought up to present-day levels it is found that the present cost of the completed building would be about three times as much as then. Rogers attributes this to the fact that middlemen were dispensed with, but there is no doubt that it also largely resulted from the fact that access to raw materials and building sites was cheap and easy.

15. *No unemployment. Demand for labour exceeds supply.  
The sick and impotent.*

There were, then, during this period no unemployed—that is, no men who wanted work but were unable to find it—but there were, of course, vagrants and wandering friars who did not want work, and also marauding bands roving the countryside. Some of these in the earlier days of Norman rule may have been turned out of their homes when the Conqueror afforested large areas of land,<sup>2</sup> but the demand for labour on the manors and the extent of the opportunities must have provided an opening for all who wanted work.

The impotent and sick were either cared for by their families or were assisted by the hospitals and monasteries. These institutions dispensed considerable charity to the sick and unfortunate, and in addition supplied the wants of many professional beggars, a form of indiscriminate charity which went a long way towards creating the very class which it supported.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Six Centuries, etc.*, p. 145.

<sup>2</sup> Ribton-Turner, *History of Vagrants and Vagrancy*.

<sup>3</sup> Ashley, *Econ. Hist.*, vol. i, bk. ii, ch. v.

## CHAPTER V

# THE BLACK DEATH AND THE PEASANTS' REVOLT

Black Death reduces supply of labour—Labour-dues commuted; wages rise—Food prices remain low—Rents fall; Statute of Labourers—Position of landlords; stock and land leases—The Peasants' Revolt—*Piers Plowman*; work for all who want it—Vagrancy increases.

### 1. *The Black Death reduces supply of labour by one-half.*

THERE was a period of prosperity after the great famine years of 1315–1316 until 1348. In this year came the catastrophe known as the Black Death, which continued with great violence for some two years. This plague attacked rich and poor, town and country dwellers alike, and from one-third to one-half of the population perished. Contemporary accounts tell us that this great wastage in the population was rapidly made good, and that for some time after the Plague population increased faster than formerly. “The repressive check of a high standard of living was removed by the ease with which the survivors could obtain that standard, and accumulate from a considerable margin beyond it.”<sup>1</sup>

It has been seen already that prior to the Black Death the opportunities for employment were normally in excess of the supply of labour, and the immediate result of the Plague was to reduce the available supply by roughly one-half, while the demand for labour in the shape of untilled fields and untended flocks and herds remained much as before.

### 2. *Labour dues commuted for money payments. Wages doubled.*

During the thirteenth century and the early part of the fourteenth labour dues on the manors were being gradually commuted for money payments, and as a result of the Black

<sup>1</sup> *Six Centuries, etc.*, p. 226.

Death this process was practically completed. Peasants and artisans now found themselves in an exceedingly strong bargaining position, and wages increased rapidly by 100 %, and in many cases even higher.

Real wages may be high because the opportunities for employment exceed the available supply of labour, and these opportunities may consist in the demand for labour by employers or the possibilities of self-employment ; and on the other hand they may be high owing to a sudden diminution in the supply of labour, the demand remaining more or less constant, and the opportunities for self-employment continuing. The former conditions were in existence prior to 1348, and after that date the latter condition was super-added. It is little wonder, then, that wages rose enormously.

### 3. *Food prices remain low. Peasant in strong position.*

Although wages rose with such rapidity and to such a great height, prices of most agricultural products and articles of food, with the exception of fish and wool, varied but little from what they were before the Plague. But goods, the production of which required a large amount of labour, did rise considerably in price.<sup>1</sup>

There was no monopoly of food production, and because the lord of the manor had to pay high wages to those who assisted in the cultivation of his land, he was not enabled thereby to obtain any more for the food he grew. He had to contend with the competition of all the tenants of the manor, and the land was open to all who wished to produce.

Lords of manors were at their wits' ends to provide enough labour to till even a part of their lands. High money wages were offered and paid, and in many cases rents were excused altogether, sometimes even for a period of years, in order to tempt the peasants to remain on the manors.

### 4. *Rents diminish. Landlords seek remedy in Statute of Labourers—a failure.*

As can well be imagined, such a state of affairs did not suit the lords of manors and great landowners, for as wages

<sup>1</sup> *Six Centuries, etc.*, p. 237.

soared they saw their rents diminishing, and they therefore sought a remedy in the Statute of Labourers. Wages were to be the same as those current before the Plague, and severe and barbarous penalties were to be enforced against those who asked and those who gave higher wages, and there were also penalties against those who left one manor to seek work elsewhere. That this statute was largely ineffective is evidenced by the necessity for frequent re-enactments and by the complaints in Parliament of its failure. There is also direct evidence that higher wages were paid from the entries in the bailiffs' accounts. These accounts frequently show a striking out of the higher wage and the substitution of a smaller sum, this smaller sum, however, being considerably in excess of the wage customary before the Plague. Thorold Rogers gives it as his opinion, from a study of large numbers of these accounts, that erasures point to evasions of the Statute of Labourers, and that even if the lower wage were paid there would be compensations in some other form to bring it up to the full amount.<sup>1</sup>

There is no doubt that with such a scarcity of labour the lord would be compelled to pay the high rate of wages in order to retain his labour, and that if he refused, there would be plenty of employers only too ready to receive absconding villeins or serfs, and who would not be likely to give them up once they had them.

#### 5. *All benefit except landlords. Stock and land leases.*

All except the great landowners and lords of manors would seem to have benefited largely as a result of the conditions following on the Black Death. Freeholders and villeins would not be affected by the price of labour, except advantageously, in so far as their children would be in a position to earn high wages; and cotters and serfs and even landless workers were in a very strong position, for they could obtain a high price for their own labour, and produce or purchase most of the goods they required as easily as before.

This great shortage of labour led to an increase of the system of stock and land leases, for farming on a large scale

<sup>1</sup> *Six Centuries, etc.*, p. 229.

by the lord of the manor had become almost an impossibility. Under this system the farm was leased, usually for a short term of years, with all stock, live and dead, at an easy rate. If the stock were not returned when the lease expired compensation was paid at a valuation which was from 30 to 40 % below the market value.<sup>1</sup> This system resulted in a large increase of tenant farmers.

#### 6. *The Peasants' Revolt—ultimately a success.*

The Peasants' Revolt of 1381, which came to a head under Wat Tyler, seems to have been due to an attempt on the part of lords of manors to recover something of what they had lost by reimposing labour dues which had long since been commuted for money payments. Wastage of labour must have been largely made good by this time, but the peasants who had experienced the freer conditions obtaining since the Plague were in no mind to submit to the reimposition of these dues. For the moment the Revolt failed, but actually it might be said to have succeeded, for economic conditions were on the side of the peasants. The remaining labour dues were commuted for money payments and copyhold tenure among villeins and serfs was greatly extended. According to Thorold Rogers, "the English labourer, for a century or more, became virtually free and constantly prosperous."<sup>2</sup>

#### 7. *"Piers Plowman." Beggars who will not work denounced. Work for all who want it.*

During the latter part of the fourteenth century we hear of many wanderers, "sturdy rogues" and beggars throughout the country. Men travelled from manor to manor and from manor to town in search of the highest wages, and wages were such that it could not have been necessary to work continuously in order to make a living. As we have said, there was no lack of work at this time, and all regulations referring to beggars seem to assume that work is available.

William Langland, in *Piers Plowman*, written between 1360 and 1400, gives us a description of England at this time as he saw it. His picture of the times is rather dismal and

<sup>1</sup> *Six Centuries, etc.*, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

pessimistic, but this is probably due to the fact that he judged from the point of view of religion. It is quite evident from his description, however, that there was no lack of opportunities for work, that provisions were abundant, and that no man need lead a lazy life. He rails against the beggars and thieves who did no work, but never seemed to want :

There were tramps and beggars fast about flitting,  
Crammed with bread in wallet and belly,  
Lying for their food, and fighting in the taverns.

The whole burden of the poem is that God's law that man should earn his living in the sweat of his brow must be kept. Langland is in no doubt that there is work for all who want it.

Every fellow of their flock that wanders about,  
Bag at his back, beggar fashion,  
And yet knows some kind of craft, which, if he would,  
Could get him bread and ale and a suit of raiment,  
And yet lives like a loller—God's law damns him.

And to the rich he says :

But for beggars with their bags, whose churches are the taverns,  
Save they be blind or broken, or else sick,  
Reck not, ye rich, but let such wastrels starve ;  
For every man that hath his health, his eyes and his limbs,  
If he useth a loller's life he liveth against God's law.

And again :

But if any be blind, broken-shanked, iron-bolted,  
He shall eat wheaten bread, and drink as well as I,  
Till God in his goodness send him better days.  
But ye, ye *could* work as Truth would ; ye could earn meat and  
drink,  
Keeping kine in the field, keeping beasts from the corn,  
Ditching and delving, threshing the sheaves,  
Helping to make mortar, or bearing muck afield.

### 8. *Commutation of labour dues and high wages increase vagrancy.*

As has been seen, the disorganization of the manors consequent on the Black Death caused large numbers of workers to wander in search of the highest wages ;<sup>1</sup> and the high

<sup>1</sup> Leonard, *English Poor Relief* : " So far the wanderers were men who had no difficulty in obtaining work, but who wanted better terms."

rate of wages obtainable, and the abundance of opportunities for employment available, doubtless increased the numbers of those who wandered, and added to the ranks of vagrants who found they could obtain a living without working, or at any rate with very little work.

In 1359 London suffered from the inrush of vagrants from the country-side, and a proclamation was issued by the City against them. This proclamation makes it clear that the authorities realized that work was obtainable, and that those who came begging to the City were depriving the sick and aged of the alms which were their due.

The House of Commons complained in 1376 and again in 1378 <sup>1</sup> of beggars wandering to the towns, and an Act of 1388, which draws a distinction for the first time between beggars able to work and those who are impotent, aimed at preventing the latter from wandering. Again, in 1391, the Commons <sup>2</sup> complain to the King that serfs and the sons of serfs are going to the towns and cannot be got back, but the King refuses to take any action.

<sup>1</sup> Eden, *The State of the Poor*.

<sup>2</sup> Ribton-Turner, *History of Vagrants and Vagrancy*.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE LORDS WIN—UNEMPLOYMENT

Labour shortage and sheep-farming—High price of wool—Enclosure of demesne, waste, woods and common pasture; evictions—Manor rolls disclose encroachments—Enclosures and declining productivity of the soil; theory disproved—Official notice of enclosures—More's *Utopia*—Sheep-farming and depopulation—Employment unobtainable; the lords win.

#### 1. *Labour shortage after Black Death leads to sheep-farming.*

It has been seen how the great manorial lords suffered through the labour shortage consequent on the Black Death—a shortage which caused many holdings of villeins and the smaller tenants to fall into the lords' hands, and made it quite impossible for the lords to farm such holdings or even a large part of their own demesne lands. For this reason after the Black Death an enclosing movement started, slowly at first, but afterwards increasing in speed and volume, whereby arable land, for which neither tenants nor sufficient labour could be obtained to work as arable, was turned into pasture-land for sheep-farming. This, of course, necessitated the fencing or enclosing of the land, and so withdrawing it from the communal scheme of husbandry; and as little labour was required to tend sheep as compared with that required for arable culture, the lord was enabled to obtain a profit where otherwise the land would probably have remained idle for many years.

#### 2. *Demand for wool further stimulates growth of sheep-farming.*

So long as this process was confined to laying down arable land to grass in a small way it probably did little harm at the time, for although it curtailed the opportunities for employment, labour was so scarce that the demand for labour and the



available opportunities still exceeded the supply. But during this period the woollen manufacturing industry was gradually developing in England; the demand for wool both for home manufacture and foreign export was growing, and during the first thirty years of the fifteenth century wool was at a very high price.<sup>1</sup> This high price obtainable for wool, and the small amount of labour required to raise it, acted as a stimulus to landlords to lay down more and more land to grass and enclose it for sheep-farms. Whereas formerly their "wealth" had consisted in the number of men on their manors, they were now coming to find that sheep-farming would bring them great monetary wealth, and that their gain would be greater than ever it had been under the old system.

This was the beginning of the first great enclosure movement of our history. By about the middle of the fifteenth century this creation of sheep-farms reached a point where any further extension would of necessity encroach on the arable land for the cultivation of which there was sufficient labour. But in spite of this the movement continued to progress, until in the latter years of the fifteenth century the legislature took action.

3. *Enclosure of demesne, waste and woods, and common pasture. Evictions of villeins, etc., and hardships of cotters. Merchants buy land.*

Before considering the results of these enclosures it is important to see exactly in what they consisted. The lord's demesne ordinarily comprised from one-third to one-half the area of the manor,<sup>2</sup> and for the greater part lay in strips scattered over the common fields. When parts of this land came to be put down to grass it was necessary to consolidate the strips affected and enclose them with a hedge. A certain amount of exchange with the other tenants would be necessary in order to effect consolidation, and as time went on villeins and other small tenants were evicted in order that their holdings might be amalgamated with the lord's land as one great sheep-farm.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thorold Rogers, *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*, p. 444.

<sup>2</sup> Ashley, *Econ. Hist.*, bk. ii, ch. iv.

<sup>3</sup> See Gonner, *Common Land and Inclosure*, p. 48.

This enclosing of demesne lands dispensed with a large amount of labour, and had a disastrous effect on the cotters, who depended for some employment on the lord's land in order to supplement what they could produce from their own small plots. The followers, sons and relations in the various peasants' households, would also find themselves deprived to a large extent of opportunities for employment, and, of course, enclosure and laying down to grass prevented any further enjoyment of rights of common over this land after the harvest was reaped.

In addition to enclosing demesne lands and evicting villeins and cotters, much of the waste land of the manors was also enclosed for sheep-farming. This policy forcibly deprived freeholders and other tenants of the manors of rights of common which they had enjoyed over the waste, and was specially hard on the neighbouring cotters,<sup>1</sup> who lost thereby invaluable rights of common, and received short shrift if their presence stood in the way of any "improvement." There is little doubt that considerations as to whether these enclosures left "sufficient" waste for the tenants did not trouble a lord who saw good profit in sheep-farms. The Highland enclosers of the eighteenth century were not affected by such considerations, and we have no reason to suppose that the fifteenth-century lords were any better. There were also considerable enclosures of woods at this time, and a consequent extinguishment of common rights over them, for charcoal-burning was a growing industry, and many lords were able to derive large incomes in this way.

During the fifteenth century trade was prosperous, and many merchants who had made fortunes in the towns began to purchase land in the country, and many copyhold tenements were so purchased.<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. *Manor Rolls disclose encroachments.*

The Manor Rolls of this period disclose many small enclosings and encroachments on common rights not necessarily connected with sheep-farming. Individual tenants would sometimes enclose a holding in the open fields or make

<sup>1</sup> Gonner, pp. 31-2.

<sup>2</sup> Ashley, *Econ. Hist.*, vol. i, pt. ii., bk. ii. ch. i.; Thorold Rogers, p. 288.

small private enclosures in the waste, and complaints that large landholders and even outsiders overburden the common pastures with sheep and cattle are frequent. It is true that these enclosers and encroachers usually appear to have been "presented" by the homage, but it is doubtful whether this would be effective in every case in getting the matter put right.

In the Manor Rolls of Wimbledon the homage often "present" and fine tenants for enclosing common land. There are also many presentments for overburdening the common at Putney with cattle and sheep, and the Dean of St. Paul's is among those so presented. "The twelve Jurors of the Great Assize of the Lord the King . . . say that John<sup>4d</sup> Hood overburthens the common pasture at Rokehampton with cattle . . . tenant of the lord: therefore he is amerced. And that John Hoke overburthens the common at Puttenhyth with his sheep beyond the quantity." <sup>1</sup>

"Also the same Robert inclosed with live thorns and great ditches, 3 acres of land lying in the Nethershot of Baston in Putneth, and holds for his severalty, whereas the tenants there from the time of which the memory of man exists not, had and ought to have common there, for all their cattle, from the Feast of St. Michael the Arch. A. to the feast of the Purification of S. Mary then following, by which they could not have their common there, to their great prejudice." <sup>2</sup> The said Robert was ordered to show cause why he should not throw the land open again.

### 5. *Theory that enclosures due to declining productivity of soil disproved.*

There is a theory—supported by Denton, Dr. Bradley (Vassar College, Columbia), and by Lord Ernle and others—that the enclosures of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were largely due to "the inevitable and progressive decline in the productivity of the soil." <sup>3</sup> "The enclosure movement is explained, not by a change in the price of wool, but by the gradual loss of productivity of common-field land." <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Manor Rolls—Wimbledon, 7 Edward IV.

<sup>3</sup> Lord Ernle.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 13 Edward IV.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Bradley.

Lennard <sup>1</sup> seems to demonstrate quite conclusively, however, that there is no evidence to show that the open fields declined in fertility in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Lord Ernle <sup>2</sup> takes as an average yield of wheat in the thirteenth century 10 bushels per acre, and states that by the fifteenth century this had fallen to between 6 and 7 bushels. Lennard, however, points out that these figures are certainly not substantiated by any available evidence, and, on the contrary, that the average yield of the thirteenth century was between  $6\frac{1}{2}$  to  $6\frac{3}{4}$  bushels, and that out of 45 wheat yields examined, only that of 1284, at Witney, reached 10 bushels. The average figures for the fourteenth century agreed by Thorold Rogers, Sir John Cullum and Davenport are  $7\frac{1}{2}$  to  $7\frac{3}{4}$  bushels, and for the fifteenth century, for which evidence is scanty, there are examples of  $8\frac{1}{2}$  bushels <sup>3</sup> and 12 bushels.<sup>4</sup>

Far from pointing to a great decline in the yield of wheat, these figures show a progressive increase in the yield, and, making all allowances for defects, it can certainly be said that at any rate no decline at all is indicated. Lennard suggests that it would be interesting to know from what figure the wheat had come if, gradually declining, it had reached 10 bushels in the thirteenth century. He also draws attention to the fact that a diminished yield would tend to increase the area under arable cultivation, and the wastage of population due to the Black Death was certainly made good before enclosures started on a large scale.

## 6. *Official notice taken of enclosures.*

The first official reference to the enclosures of this period is found in a speech prepared by Lord Chancellor John Russell for the opening of the first Parliament of Richard III, 1483 : <sup>5</sup> "And yet, be he never so gret, yff by hys doynge thys body (*the English people*) fallethe yn decaye, as we see dayly hyt doothe by closures and emparkynge, by dryvyng away of

<sup>1</sup> See *Econ. Journal*, March 1922.

<sup>2</sup> "The Enclosure of Open-Field Farms," *Journal of the Ministry of Agriculture*, December 1920 and January 1921.

<sup>3</sup> Account Roll of Ansty, Herts., 1401 harvest. See appendix to first volume of Cunningham.

<sup>4</sup> Abisham, Kent. Undated document in Canterbury Cathedral. Thorold Rogers assigns to middle of fifteenth century.

<sup>5</sup> Camden Society, 1854, Iii.

tenauntes and lattyng downe of tenauntries ; and yet, that ys most to be sorowed, by unlaufulle assembleus and insurrections, puttyng not only the people but allso the nobles to extreme jupertu and peril of lyff and londes, where by thys . . . is gretly dispeupled."

This is strong contemporary evidence, fully corroborated, as will be seen later, that enclosures were causing involuntary unemployment and depopulation of the manors.

Six years after this, in 1489, the first Act of Parliament against enclosures was passed, entitled an Act "Agaynst pullying down of Tounes." The preamble to this Act states that unemployment was due to enclosures, and the Act itself was directed against those who were letting arable lands for sheep-farms, and allowing farm-houses and buildings to fall into a state of decay. Houses and buildings necessary for tillage were to be maintained on all holdings of 20 acres or more which had been let to farm during the preceding three years or which should be so let in the future. This Act, like several others with the same purpose which we shall have occasion to mention, was wholly ineffective.

### 7. More's "*Utopia*"—contemporary evidence.

Sir Thomas More, for some time Henry VIII's Lord Chancellor, in 1516 wrote his famous *Utopia*. In this book we have a detailed description of England while the enclosure policy was in progress. Some modern writers have held that this description is exaggerated, but apart from the picturesqueness of some of the language, the evidence seems to bear out and to be corroborated by the evidence of other contemporaries, and is also confirmed, as will be seen in Chapter VIII, by a Report of a Government Commission in 1517-18. We shall also have occasion in a later chapter<sup>1</sup> to consider a period of enclosing in Scotland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for a similar purpose, and the reports of eye-witnesses then describe scenes similar to those referred to by More, and one would hardly expect hardships to be less, or evictions less harsh, in the fifteenth than they were in the nineteenth century. It would also seem to be self-evident

<sup>1</sup> Chapter XIV.

that where arable land was laid down to grass for sheep-farming there would be local depopulation.

8. *Sheep-farming causes demolition of houses and depopulation. Harsh measures taken by enclosers.*

The story of the enclosures is told by one Raphael Hythloday, a traveller. He speaks of the sheep as having eaten up the men, and says : " They consume, destroy, and devour whole fields, houses, and cities." The cause of the growth of sheep-farms is no mystery to him. " Noblemen and gentlemen, yea and certain abbots . . . not contenting themselves with the yearly revenues and profits, that were wont to grow to their forefathers and predecessors of their lands . . . yea much annoying the weal public leave no ground for tillage, they inclose all into pastures ; they throw down houses ; they pluck down towns, and leave nothing standing, but only the church to be made a sheep-house." But these are not the only enclosures : " And as though you lost no small quantity of ground by forests, chases, lawns, and parks, those good holy men turn all dwelling-places and all glebe land into desolation and wilderness."

He then gives us an insight into the methods of the enclosers, and tells how one man may enclose " many thousand acres " within one hedge, and get rid of the husbandmen " by cunning and fraud," or " by violent oppression," or by so harassing them " that they be compelled to sell all." They are then compelled to depart with all their households, " small in substance and much in number." " Away they trudge, I say, out of their known and accustomed houses, finding no place to rest in. All their household stuff which is very little worth, though it might well abide the sale ; yet being suddenly thrust out, they be constrained to sell it for a thing of nought."

9. *Employment unobtainable. The lords win.*

He then follows the dispossessed, and asks what they can do but steal or beg. If they steal they will be hanged, and if they beg " they be cast in prison as vagabonds, because they go about and work not : *whom no man will set a work, though they never so willingly proffer themselves thereto.*" <sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> The italics are ours.

reason for this lack of work is clear to him: "For one shepherd or herdsman is enough to eat up that ground with cattle, to the occupying whereof about husbandry many hands were requisite. And this is also the cause why victuals be now in many places dearer."

The lords of manors had at last solved the problem which faced them after the Black Death, and found a means of increasing rents in spite of a shortage of labour. It is worthy of note in this connection that whereas in the fourteenth century land sold at ten years' purchase, in the middle of the fifteenth century it sold at twenty years' purchase.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thorold Rogers, *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*, p. 288.

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## CHAPTER VII

### BEGGARS COME TO TOWN

The town working class ; coming of the beggars—Rise of large-scale industry ; enclosures provide cheap labour—No work for the beggars.

#### 1. *The town working class. The coming of the beggars.*

It has been seen how the City of London was complaining in the latter part of the fourteenth century of the influx of wanderers in search of higher wages, and there are indications that in the latter half of the fifteenth century this influx of beggars was becoming troublesome.

It was during this period, too, that the system of division of labour developed, and the capitalist artisan came into being.<sup>1</sup> Industries began to be carried on on what was then a large scale, and a distinct "working class" began to appear in the towns. This was a class of what might be called dependent wage-earners—a class, that is, who had little hope of rising to be master-men, and for whom the opportunities of finding alternative employment in the villages or of employing themselves on holdings of their own were rapidly diminishing. These men consisted of villeins and cotters and their families whose lands had been "eaten up" by the sheep, of disbanded soldiers and discharged retainers, whose masters had been ruined as a result of the Wars of the Roses.

Most of the beggars and wanderers in the towns in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries had originally started on their travels in search of higher wages, and work was available for them on the manors had they wanted it. But the wanderers who were coming to the towns towards the end of the fifteenth century had not that alternative ; they came in search of work, and not merely to find higher wages.

<sup>1</sup> Thorold Rogers, p. 338 ; Ashley, *Econ. Hist.*, vol. i, pt. ii, bk. ii, ch. ii.



They were the forerunners of those crowds of beggars and sturdy rogues who in the sixteenth century invaded the towns and terrorized the country-side. It was of these beggars that the old rhyme was first repeated :

Hark ! hark ! the dogs do bark ;  
The beggars are coming to town.

2. *Rise of large-scale industry—enclosures provide cheap labour.*

The manufacture of woollen cloth was increasing rapidly during the fifteenth century, and many other small industries were springing up, not always in the towns, for at this time there was a movement from the towns to the country on the part of many industries. This was caused to some extent by restrictive ordinances of the gilds, and often resulted in the decay of the town.

These industries must have provided openings for many workers, but the gilds, the prototypes of the modern Trade Union, saw the time coming when there would be a surplus of labour in the towns, and as they realized the results of this, they early developed a struggle between the gilds and the free workers. An ordinance of the City of London of 1387 forbade the acceptance of any villein as an apprentice, and in 1406 an Act of Parliament forbade the apprenticing of children of men who earned less than 20s. a year. The trouble was that the free labourer was increasing faster than he could be absorbed in industry. The policy of enclosures for sheep-farms was providing cheap labour for the new large-scale industries, and the rich merchants who had acquired fortunes in the towns were buying estates and becoming landed proprietors. And although wages were high for the most part through the fifteenth century, yet the trek from the villages was going to make itself felt in wages in the early part of the sixteenth century.

3. *Beggars for whom no work is available.*

In addition to those who were actually deprived of their livelihood on the manors by the enclosures, the ranks of the "beggars" in the latter half of the fifteenth century were augmented by discharged personal servants of great men,

described by More as "idle and loitering serving-men," and by soldiers disbanded from the French wars. But for the enclosure movement and the growth of sheep-farming it is probable that all of these who wanted work would have found it, but when it is realized that those who had a means of livelihood had been deprived and turned adrift, there is little wonder that these others drifted into the class of beggars "whom no man will set a work, though they never so willingly proffer themselves thereto."

At a time when the old Feudal System, as established by the early Normans, was breaking up, when men whose employment furnished by war and service was coming to an end, the opportunities for employment were enormously curtailed by enclosures.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ENCLOSURES

Government moves against ingrossers and enclosers—First Enclosure Commission 1517-18—A widespread movement—Complaints against ingrossing, consolidation, and conversion of arable—Lay and ecclesiastical landlords compared—Enclosures largely to pasture; a profitable proceeding—Statistics for Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire and Warwickshire—Lansdowne MSS. statistics for Norfolk, Staffordshire and Isle of Wight—Wolsey acts on findings—Decay of houses and depopulation of villages reported—Copyholders and tenants among evictors; copyholders had legal security of tenure—Villeins holding customary lands at will had legal security—Some copyholders dispossessed—Further measures against conversion of arable—Confiscation of Monastic lands and fresh enclosures—Rising in the north; Government's instructions to Council—Loss of common rights a lasting injury to the community—FitzHerbert—Omissions from returns of Enclosure Commissioners.

#### 1. *The Government moves against ingrossers and enclosers.*

IN the beginning of the sixteenth century the enclosure movement assumed such serious proportions, and its evil results were so apparent, that the Government began to take further and more energetic measures in an attempt to stem the trouble, for the Act of 1489 against the pulling down of towns had been inoperative.<sup>1</sup>

In 1514, therefore, there was issued a proclamation against ingrossing farms or the absorbing into one hand of a large number of holdings. In this proclamation the scarcity of grain and other foodstuffs was said to be due to the ingrossing of farms and the conversion of arable land to pasture. This view was supported by evidence from a wide area, for it was based on information which the Government had received from "justices of the peace and commissioners of every shire

<sup>1</sup> 20 Henry VIII, cap. 22, recites that this Act had been enforced only in lands held immediately of the King. Leadam, *Select Cases, Court of Requests*: "A search of the Exchequer Rolls reveals that he allowed it to remain inoperative."

within his said realme." Those holding more than one farm were ordered to cultivate the land as it had been up to the first year of Henry VII, but again subsequent enactments show that this decree was inoperative.

## 2. *The first Enclosure Commission, 1517-18.*

Another Act was passed in 1515,<sup>1</sup> "concernyng the pulling downe of Townes." This enacted that all habitations that had fallen into decay since the beginning of that Parliament were to be rebuilt within a year, and all land that had been put down to pasture in the same period was to be ploughed up. In 1516 there was yet a further Act concerning the decaying of houses.

The failure of any of these Acts or Proclamations to take effect led to the appointment of a Royal Commission, the Enclosure Inquisition of 1517-18, to inquire into the evil. This Inquisition made returns to Chancery, and the reports extant form what has been called the Domesday of Enclosures.<sup>2</sup> It is probable that Sir Thomas More was concerned in the establishment of this Commission, and Wolsey certainly did his best to counteract the evils reported on by proceeding against those presented by the Commissioners.

## 3. *Statistics incomplete, but a widespread movement indicated.*

The information furnished by the reports of this Commission is incomplete, and from what we know of the difficulties encountered by subsequent Commissions, and taking into consideration the insecurity of the class most effected, this incompleteness cannot be wondered at. Those who held by precarious tenure would not be ready to come forward and give evidence against the lord who might immediately turn them adrift; and we know that some of the Commissioners were themselves enclosers, and might be disposed to let down lightly some of their fellow-offenders. Intimidation of witnesses was probably rife; Hales tells of it in connection with the Commission of 1548-9, and Commissioners reporting in comparatively recent times have told similar tales.

<sup>1</sup> 6 Henry VIII, cap. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Trans. R. Hist. Soc.*, "Domesday of Inclosures," vols. i and ii, edited by Leadam.

The original Chancery Returns, still extant, deal with the counties of Warwickshire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Leicestershire, Cheshire, Essex, and Lincolnshire, but only for the first five of these do the returns attain any degree of completeness. There is, however, in the Lansdowne MSS.<sup>1</sup> a summary, probably made from the original returns of this Commission shortly after the death of Henry VIII, of information dealing with several other counties, viz. Norfolk, Yorkshire, Herefordshire, Staffordshire, Hampshire, and the Isle of Wight, London and suburbs, Berkshire, Gloucestershire, Cambridgeshire, and Shropshire.

In estimating the value of the Returns made by this Commission it is important to note that, where enclosures had been made by Royal Licence, the Commission makes no report, and that only those enclosures made since 1488 were reported on. Although, therefore, the extant Returns and the summaries in the Lansdowne MSS. are incomplete, and the figures given in many cases not as large as one would expect,<sup>2</sup> the evidence goes to show that the movement was widespread throughout the country, and was everywhere attended by serious consequences.

#### 4. *Complaints against ingrossing, consolidation, and conversion of arable to pasture.*

Among the evils complained of was the "ingrossing" of farms—that is, the absorbing into one hand of several holdings—and this led to the destruction of houses and farm buildings on some of the holdings, whether the whole area were put down to grass or whether it were run as a large-scale arable farm. When the farm-house and buildings were destroyed or allowed to fall into decay, the farm to which they belonged was said to be "consolidated."

There are also a large number of presentments for enclosures of arable land, whether or no this was converted to pasture; for the enclosure of arable land for large-scale arable farming usually led to consolidation of farms, with the consequent destruction or decay of farm-houses and buildings and depopulation.

<sup>1</sup> Lansdowne MSS. I, 153, published in *Trans. R. Hist. Soc.*, 1892, 1893 and 1894.

<sup>2</sup> See par. 10.

5. *Lay and ecclesiastical landlords compared.*

There is much information to be gained from the Returns of this Commission as to the relative qualities of lay and ecclesiastical owners as landlords. As regards cotters, we find that on lay land there are some twenty cottages with land as against nineteen without, whereas on ecclesiastical estates there are twenty-nine with as against two without.<sup>1</sup> This would seem to show that the Church was usually an easy landlord, and that changes were slow in coming on its land.

When we come to figures for displacing of population consequent on enclosures, it is found that depopulation is 10 % less on ecclesiastical than on lay estates, but, on the other hand, some ecclesiastical rents are higher than those on corresponding lay lands. From the Returns for Buckinghamshire it is found that freeholders on lay estates were evicted at nearly twice the rate of those on ecclesiastical lands.<sup>2</sup> But in the case of Northamptonshire it is found that the Abbots of Peterborough were in the forefront of the enclosers with a total of 998½ acres enclosed and 100 people evicted, who, according to the jury presenting, "are become unemployed and despairing."<sup>3</sup> The total rental value per acre of ecclesiastical land in this county is 1s. 4½d., as compared with 8¾d. for lay land.

Taking one county with another throughout the country the balance, if any, seems to be slightly in favour of the ecclesiastics as landlords.

6. *Enclosures largely to pasture—a profitable proceeding.*

Comparing the rental values of arable and pasture lands generally, it is found that on an average the value of

Open arable is	..	..	..	7·76d. per acre.
Enclosed arable	..	..	..	10·21d. per acre.
And enclosed pasture	..	..	..	13·03d. per acre.

<sup>1</sup> *Domesday of Enclosures*, vol. i, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Leadam: "There was a more rapid change upon lay estates from tenure to contract, or from a holding of which the conditions were fixed by custom to one in which they were determined by competition, for leaseholds form 54·4 % of the total lay land let."

<sup>3</sup> "Et dicunt quod ratione predictarum inclusionem in Peterburgh predicta octo aratra deponuntur et centum persone que circa Culturam terrarum predictarum occupari solebant modo ociosi fient et miseri facti sunt." . . (*Domesday of Enclosures*, p. 255.)

This shows that land enclosed to pasture had an improved rental over open arable of 67·9 %, or over enclosed arable of 27·61 %. The rental of enclosed arable over open arable was 31·57 %, and, "treating each county as a unit, the improved profits on enclosure and conversion to pasture as compared with enclosure of arable average nearly 28 %." <sup>1</sup>

The county of Berkshire is, however, an exception, for there arable land brings a higher rent than pasture-land, and in this county 61·04 % of the total enclosures returned was enclosure to arable. Corresponding figures for other counties are :

PROPORTION OF TOTAL ENCLOSURE.

					To Arable.	To Pasture.
Leicester	..	..	..	..	11·007	88·9
Warwick	..	..	..	..	11·03	88·8
Northants	..	..	..	..	13·4	86·5
Bucks	..	..	..	..	18·4	81·5
Oxon	..	..	..	..	25·9	74·01
Beds	..	..	..	..	31·3	68·6

These figures plainly show that the movement was one largely of enclosure and conversion to pasture, and the fact that such conversion gave an increased profit of 28 % over enclosure to arable would naturally lead us to expect such a result.

*7. Acreage disclosed in available returns. Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire.*

Taking the few counties for which the original returns are extant, it is recorded that some 9,878 acres were enclosed as arable and 30,443 acres to pasture, and in addition several thousand acres were ingrossed. The particulars given in the Lansdowne MSS. account for a further area of approximately 27,000 acres enclosed. In considering these figures it must be borne in mind that the original returns are incomplete, and the Lansdowne MSS. statistics very much more incomplete. But even with these figures it can be seen that the results were serious.

In the case of Berkshire there are 4,163 acres ingrossed and 6,615 acres enclosed, of which 274 acres were enclosed for sport. This brought about the eviction and displacement

<sup>1</sup> Leadam.

of 670 persons and the demolition of 119 tenements—a considerable number, having regard to the area concerned.

In Buckinghamshire the area ingrossed is 7,905 acres and the area enclosed 9,000 acres, bringing about the eviction or displacement of 1,131 persons and the decay of 172 houses.<sup>1</sup>

The Northamptonshire returns are very deficient, but these show 7,097 acres as ingrossed and 8,688 acres enclosed, of which 221 acres were for sport. This brought about the eviction or displacement of 1,405 persons and the destruction of 354 houses.<sup>2</sup>

### 8. *Enclosures, etc. in Oxfordshire and Warwickshire.*

There are figures given for each of the 14 hundreds in Oxfordshire, showing that 11,587 acres were ingrossed and 8,570 acres inclosed, of which 69 acres were for sport. In the hundred of Bullingdon 3·5 % of the whole area was enclosed, equalling 1,634 acres, and 92 % of this was enclosed to pasture; and in the hundred of Wootton the whole area enclosed was enclosed to pasture.

The returns give an example of an extensive ingrossing in this county by one William Bedyll, of London. His ingrossings are calculated at about 6,398½ acres of a value of £186 13s. 4d. There were 720 persons evicted in this county and 186 houses decayed.<sup>3</sup>

The returns for Warwickshire show 5,795½ acres ingrossed and 7,948 acres enclosed. There were 1,018 persons displaced and 207 houses decayed.<sup>4</sup> Dugdale<sup>5</sup> affords us an example of enclosing in the Knightlow Hundred in the reign of Henry VII. "That Thomas Twyford in 4. H.7. depopulated foure messuages and 3 cottages in Stretton-Baskervill whereunto clx acres of land belonged; and soone after solde the whole lordshipp to Henry Smyth gentleman, who in 9. H.7 inclosed and depopulated y<sup>e</sup> rest."

"That Thomas Marquesse Dorset in 12. H.7 impaled nynety acres of errable land, lying within the lordshipp of Arley, within his parke at Astley called the old parke."

<sup>1</sup> Professor Gay.

<sup>2</sup> Id.

<sup>3</sup> Id.

<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> Dugdale MSS., Inquis. Super. Depop., 3 Edward VI., 1549.



### 9. *Norfolk, Staffordshire, and the Isle of Wight.*

The statistics in the Lansdowne MSS. are plainly fragmentary, but they indicate the prevalence of the same state of affairs as is disclosed in the original returns. The figures for Norfolk are most complete, and here we find 10,454 acres enclosed or converted to pasture, causing the destruction of 76 houses and the eviction of 380 persons. In addition to these there is the complete enclosure of a hamlet at Castellacre,<sup>1</sup> with the destruction of all the tenements.

In Staffordshire, although only 488½ acres of enclosures are mentioned, 63·93 % of these were enclosed for sport.

The small area, 355 acres, given as enclosed in the Isle of Wight would seem to show that the extensive enclosures prior to 1488 had slackened since that date.

### 10. *Wolsey acts on findings of the Commission.*

As soon as the returns of this Commission began to come in, Wolsey instituted proceedings in Chancery against those presented, but these proceedings were frequently stayed when the defendants entered into recognizances to rebuild decayed houses and to restore arable land. In 1518 Wolsey issued a decree, ordering those who had pleaded the King's pardon or had thrown themselves on his mercy to restore enclosed lands within forty days under penalty of a heavy fine, but there is evidence that these proclamations and decrees were seldom specifically enforced, the enclosers usually preferring to pay a lump sum or annual fine by way of composition—a method which would appeal to the King, who was always looking out for new means of raising money.

There was also a proviso to Wolsey's decree which no doubt went a long way to render it nugatory, for the offenders might be excused if they could bring evidence to show that what they had done was for the public benefit, or that they had not broken any of the statutes against the decaying of houses.<sup>2</sup> Such evidence was, as we should anticipate, frequently brought.

<sup>1</sup> "Unum integrum hamelett cum omnibus tenementes."

<sup>2</sup> S.P. Dom., Henry VIII, II, ii, App. 53.

11. *The Commission reports decay of houses and depopulation of villages.*

The findings of this Commission, then, seem to bear out and substantiate exactly what Sir Thomas More wrote in *Utopia*. Over and over again do we read in the Returns that so many houses have been decayed or laid waste and that so many persons have left. One short extract from a presentment will give an example of this: "Within the vill of Chaysell the houses aforetime of John Willyers are laid waste, and the inhabitants have departed; and there pertain to the said houses 300 acres of land, whereof 30 are arable and the rest are in pasture. And the houses of Burton Lazars in the same vill are laid waste, and the inhabitants have departed; and there belong to the same houses 300 acres of land, whereof 40 are ploughed, but the rest pasture; and by this downfall the church has fallen in ruins."

In their reports on the various counties the Commissioners always stress the fact that all presentments for the decay of houses are correct, and that the kingdom is being impoverished and the country-side depopulated.

12. *Copyholders and tenants among the evictors. The copyholder had legal security of tenure.*

The returns show that freeholders as well as lords of manors were responsible for evictions and enclosures, and it also seems clear that there were copyholders among the evictors. The Act of 1488 "concernynge the Isle of Wight" stated that "farmers"<sup>1</sup> were responsible for consolidations, and the Act of 1562 "for the mayntenaunce and encrease of tyllage" specifies copyholders as among the "owners" referred to in the statute of 1488. Farming tenants are frequently mentioned as evictors, and 5 of the 125 enclosers in Norfolk seem to have been copyholders.<sup>2</sup> Copyholders were also sometimes among the dispossessed, for at a time when might was right legal security of tenure availed little.

According to Ashley,<sup>3</sup> customary tenants had no legal

<sup>1</sup> According to an anonymous Memorial to Vicar-General Cromwell, the "firmas" were often chiefly responsible for "laying ground to pasture." (Quoted by Ashley, *Econ. Hist.*, bk. ii, ch. iv.)

<sup>2</sup> Leadam, *Trans. R. Hist. Soc.*, 1892.

<sup>3</sup> *Econ. Hist.*, bk. ii, ch. iv.

security at this time, and "the lords knew this and acted upon it"; also, "Custom would seem to have been on the point of becoming law when a change in the economic situation—the increasing advantage of pasture over tillage—prompted the lords to fall back on their old rights." Against this theory, however, the evidence seems to be strong in favour of the full legal security of all customary tenants. It is, of course, important to distinguish between tenure "at the will of the lord according to the custom of the manor" (copyhold), tenure "at the will of the lord" on customary land, and tenure "at the will of the lord" at common law. The two cases quoted in Chapter IV—that of 1369<sup>1</sup> and that of 1468—had established that the copyholder had security of tenure provided he rendered the customary services. Writing before the decision of 1468, Littleton said: "But the lord cannot break the custom which is reasonable in these cases," and in his judgment in the case of 1468 Brian, C. J., laid down the law in no uncertain language.

### 13. *Villeins holding customary lands "ad voluntatem" had legal security.*

Again, as early as 1304,<sup>2</sup> it was laid down that a "nativus," or "villein in gross," who held customary lands "at the will of the lord," had security against the lord so long as he performed his services. Britton<sup>3</sup> defined "villeinage in gross" as "a holding of demesne of any lord, granted to hold at his will by villein services . . . and delivered by verge and not by written title." In 1487<sup>4</sup> it was decided that a villein in gross receiving a grant of land for a term of years was thereby manumitted, as he had an interest in the land which he could maintain against the lord.

Littleton also differentiates between these tenures: "And there are divers diversities between tenant at will, which is in by lease of his lessor by the course of the common law,

<sup>1</sup> Danby, C. J., said: "Et sir si le Roy entre en ma terre jeo naura remedie mes mon peticion, etc., mes e roy est tenus de droit de moy restorer, issint est le seigneur tenus de restorer son tenant a volonte secundum consuetudinem."

<sup>2</sup> *Year Book*, 32 and 33 Edward I, p. 514.

<sup>3</sup> Britton, III, ii, 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Year Book*, 11 Henry VII, p. 3.

and tenant according to the custome of the manor in forme aforesaid. For tenant at will according to the custome may have an estate of inheritance (as is aforesaid) at the will of the lord, according to the custome and usage of the manor." Coke, commenting on this, writes: "Here note that Littleton alloweth that by the custome of the manor the copyholder hath an inheritance, and consequently the lord cannot put him out without cause."

#### 14. *Some copyholders among the dispossessed.*

The majority of those evicted, then, belonged to the class holding at the will of the lord at common law, on tenancies from year to year, or on leases for lives or a term.<sup>1</sup> Copyholders, however, could be, and were, dispossessed by the lord, who refused to admit the heir or demanded an exorbitant fine on admittance; and although copyholders and tenants of customary lands had legal security of tenure, this legal security often availed them little.

In referring to the dispossession of a tenant, Crowley<sup>2</sup> says: "Yea, though he have been honeste, true, faythfull, and quiete tenant many yeares, yet at the vacation of his copie or indenture, he must paye welmoste as muche as would purchayse so much grounde or else voide in hast."

#### 15. *Further measures against conversion of arable land.*

The results of the widespread enclosure movement continued to trouble the Government, and an Act was passed in 1534 to prevent consolidations and the conversions of arable land to pasture. The Act recites how churches and towns have been demolished to make way for sheep because of "the great Profit that cometh of Sheep," and how rents have been raised and fines enhanced so that "poor men are not able to meddle with it." Some are alleged to keep as many as 24,000 sheep, and the Act fixes a maximum of 2,000 under penalties. It is also enacted that no man may have more than two farms, and these not in the same parish.

<sup>1</sup> J. Musand, a monk of Worcester, writing to Cromwell, January 31, 1536: "He (*the abbot*) and his predecessors have taken 200 or 300 acres of land from the tenants to enlarge his park" (Gairdner, *L. and P.*, x, 216).

<sup>2</sup> MS. Brit. Museum, f. 8., Furnivall's *Intro. to Ballads from MSS.*, i. 24.

In 1533<sup>1</sup> there are complaints against the Abbot of Pershore for interfering with commons and expelling tenants from copyholds.

A further Act was passed in 1536 reciting that the Act of 1489 had only been operative on lands held immediately of the King, and enacting that half profits should be paid to the crown where there had been conversion until a house had been built to at least every 50 acres. This statute applied principally to twelve Midland counties, which were named, to Lincolnshire and to the Isle of Wight.

#### 16. *Confiscation of monastic lands leads to fresh enclosures.*

About the year 1536 Henry began dissolving the smaller monasteries and handing their lands over to various favourites and courtiers; and by 1539 the rest of the monasteries were dissolved, and their estates confiscated and given or sold to lay landlords.

There has been much controversy as to the part played by the monasteries in helping the poor,<sup>2</sup> but whatever may have been the value of their activities in this direction, the important point is that the monastic landlords were replaced by the King's favourites and wealthy merchants, who, for the most part, were rapacious absentees, who meant to squeeze all they could out of their newly-acquired property. This confiscation of the Church estates of course led to fresh enclosing activities and consequent evictions. "As actually happened, the transfer occurred at a moment when the impoverishment of the landlords by foreign wars, taxation, and extravagance, and the enrichment of the commercial classes in a period of internal peace, had created a new order of men, whose instinct was to become possessors of land and to treat their acquisitions, not simply as an accession of feudal dignity, but as an investment to be made remunerative."<sup>3</sup> It has been said that the monastic lands formed from one-

<sup>1</sup> S.P. Dom., Henry VIII, vi, 298.

<sup>2</sup> Fuller, the Church historian: "Yea, those abbeys did but maintain the poor which they made." Eden: "Notwithstanding this opinion and expression in the Statutes, I very much doubt, whether the monasteries generally and greatly troubled themselves with relieving Poor that did not immediately belong to their own demesnes."

<sup>3</sup> Leadam, *Select Cases, Court of Requests* (Selden Society).

fifth to one-third of the land of the country, and even if the former estimate be taken, the revolutionary nature of the change is apparent.<sup>1</sup>

By a statute of 1536<sup>2</sup> persons who had received monastic lands were required, under a penalty, to keep as much in tillage as had been usual during the preceding twenty years, and this requirement would seem to suggest that a grant of monastic lands frequently resulted in enclosures for sheep-farming, with a consequent displacement of the population.

17. *The rising in the north. Government's instructions to the Council of the North.*

In 1536, partly as a result of the confiscation of the Church estates and partly on account of the enclosing movement, the rising known as the Pilgrimage of Grace broke out in the north of England. Considerable feeling was shown against enclosures and also against the increased fines which were being demanded of copyholders.<sup>3</sup> "What with the spoiling of them now and the gressing<sup>4</sup> of them so marvellously sore in time past and with the increasing of lords' rents by inclosings, and for lack of the persons of such as shall suffer, this border is sore weked and specially Westmoreland; the more pity they should so deserve, and also that they have been so sore handled in times past, which, as I and all other here think, was the only cause of this rebellion."<sup>5</sup>

The Government also seem to have been alive to the enclosing movement and high fines in the north of England, for the Council of the North in 1538 is directed "from time to time to make diligent inquisition who hath taken in and

<sup>1</sup> Thorold Rogers, *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*, p. 322: "The annual value of the monastic lands was estimated at over £160,000. This is certainly not an exaggeration if, as is so frequently alleged, these institutions held a third of the land in the kingdom, and that not the least fertile portion. . . . But it may be the net value after the charges on the property, created by Henry himself, . . . and after the beneficial leases, which the corporations were said to have extensively granted in view of the coming storm, are deducted or allowed for."

<sup>2</sup> 27 Henry VIII, cap. 28.

<sup>3</sup> "As the end of the rebellion trailed off to the 'high and wild countries' of the north, the anti-enclosure feeling, coupled with bitterness at the increase of 'gressoms,' found vent in the casting open of parks and closes." (Gay, *Trans. R. Hist. Soc.*, N.S., vol. xviii.)

<sup>4</sup> Fining.

<sup>5</sup> *L. and P. Henry VIII*, xii, i., 478 and 200.

enclosed any commons, called intakes, who be extreme in taking gressoms and overing of rents, and to call the parties that have so used themselves evil therein before them; and, leaving all respects and affections apart, they shall take such order for the redress of the enormities used in the same, as that the poor people be not oppressed, but that they may live after their sorts and qualities.”<sup>1</sup>

**18.** *Enclosures and the deprivation of common rights a lasting injury to the community.*

Gonner,<sup>2</sup> writing of the enclosures for sheep-farming in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, says: “The change was hardly progressive. In some cases it meant slight use of the land and a corresponding degree of desolation.” He further adds: “On the other hand, it by no means follows that the movement implied national or widespread evil. It meant local disturbance, and local disturbance where the mobility of labour was slight, entailed individual injury; but on the other hand much land was exhausted, and the rest enjoyed brought about an increase when later on it was reconverted.” . . . “Thirdly, in the sixteenth century parks and demesnes were often inclosed and commons or land over which people had exercised common rights of pasture and the like curtailed in many counties.” . . . “While further there seems ground for believing that wastes over which common right had been in active use were interfered with to the loss and discontent of the commoners.”

It is true, of course, that enclosures did cause “local disturbance” of population, but the evidence already adduced indicates that the disturbed localities were sufficiently numerous to designate the “disturbance” a “national” and “widespread evil.” Also it must be constantly borne in mind that the “injury” was not so much “individual” as *communal*. An injury to the community, such as the loss of various forms of “common rights” over the land, endures beyond the lifetime of the individuals first affected, and is a fresh loss to each succeeding generation.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Dr. R. R. Reid in *The King's Council of the North*.

<sup>2</sup> *Common Land and Inclosures*.

19. *The testimony of FitzHerbert. Omissions from the Returns of the Enclosure Commissioners.*

John FitzHerbert, in his "*Boke of Surveyinge*"<sup>1</sup> (1539), throws further light on the enclosures of this period: "And it was of old tyme that all the landes, medowes and pastures lay open and unclosed. And then was theyr tenementes moche better cheape than they be nowe, for the mooste part of the lordes have enclosed their demeyn landes and medowes, and kepe them in severaltie, so that theyr tenauntes have no commyn with them therin. And also the lordes have enclosed a great parte of their waste groundes, and streytened their tenauntes of their commyns therein, and also have gyven lycence to dyvers of their tenauntes to . . . take in new intackes, or closes out of the commens, payeng to their lordes more rent therefore, so that the commen pastures waxen lasse." FitzHerbert advocates enclosure of arable as labour-saving, but adds: "Peradventure some men would say that this should be against the common weale, because the sheepe herdes, heerdmen, and swynheerdes shulde then be put out of wages."<sup>2</sup>

According to Gonner, in addition to the enclosure of demesne lands, "other land previously brought into cultivation from the wild was changed in its use." Commenting on this Gonner says: "This latter feature needs to be borne in mind. since in some counties and regions it adds considerably to the area over which change was possible. It seems doubtful if such land would be included in the returns to inclosure commissions.<sup>3</sup> Certainly the figures of these do not seem very striking. Possibly this was the case in Warwickshire, where the gradual disappearance of forest must have brought and been bringing much new land into cultivation."

With reference to the discontent and risings of the sixteenth century, Gonner writes that these were "not necessarily associated with the conversion of arable. They were probably just as much due to the inclosures of commons, with the consequent deprivation of common rights."

<sup>1</sup> P. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter XL.

<sup>3</sup> See par. 3.



## CHAPTER IX

### RESULTS OF ENCLOSURES

Methods of eviction; Court of Requests—Cotters and small tenants forcibly dispossessed; case of Inhabitants of Burnam—Harrison and changed estate of the peasant—Risings in the west, 1548-9—Somerset's anti-enclosure proclamation; rising in eastern counties—John Hales's Defence; difficulties of the Commissioners—Strype corroborates Hales—Statute of Merton re-enacted; complaints continue—Enclosure to pasture slackens, but enclosures continue throughout Elizabeth's reign—Decay of tillage since Domesday; sixteenth-century writers do not exaggerate—Open-field village predominates; most accessible land monopolized—Natural opportunities for employment artificially restricted: no alternative employment—The landless labourer; increase of beggars and severe repression—Repression fails; vagrancy increases—Statute of Apprentices; regulation of wages—Poor Law Act, 1601—Harrison and enclosures—No question of over-population until enclosure movement—Thorold Rogers and cause of sixteenth-century poverty—Previous debasement of coinage did not cause high prices and unemployment.

#### 1. *Methods of evicting tenants—heavy gressoms and short-term leases. The Court of Requests.*

BEFORE considering the further progress of enclosures in the sixteenth century, it will be as well to note exactly how evictions came to be carried out, how those whose forefathers had been on the land for centuries with security of tenure came to be deprived of their livelihood. Many villeins and small tenants who had become copyholders were deprived of their holdings by a refusal to admit the heir, or by extortionate fines demanded on admission.<sup>1</sup> This was the "gressom" referred to in the demands of the Pilgrimage of Grace, when it was asked that those who had taken abbey lands should charge "two years' rent for gressom and no more."

Another fairly common method by which copyholders were deprived of their holdings was by getting them to accept,

<sup>1</sup> Ashley, *Econ. Hist.*, bk. ii, ch. iv.

or compelling them by force and threats to accept, short-term leases instead of their copies, and then evicting them when the leases ran out. There were several cases in the Court of Requests<sup>1</sup> dealing with this point. The case of *Kent and Other Inhabitants of Abbots Ripton v. Seyntjohn*, 1543-4, is an example of oppression by the lay transferee of the lands appertaining to the Abbey of Ramsey. The copyholders were compelled to accept short-term leases instead of their copies, the steward advising them "to relynyqshe their coppie holdes beyng allwayes voydable in the law at the wyll of the lord." This was, of course, bad law, the copyholders' tenure being "at the will of the lord, according to the custom of the manor," and in interpreting this to mean "at the whim of the lord," the lord was illegally depriving the copyholders of their inheritance.

Another bad case before this court was that of the *Inhabitants of Whitby v. York* in 1553. Sir John York was a London merchant who had purchased monastic lands. On taking over, he had increased the rents by 122·48 %, and exacted a further sum of £23 15s. 8d. by way of a fine. Both copyholders and leaseholders complain that Sir John had compelled them to give up their leases so that they became mere tenants at will, and they had even been threatened with imprisonment if they refused to accept these terms. It can well be imagined, too, that at this time landlords had many ways of compelling tenants to accept their terms.

## 2. *Cotters and small tenants forcibly dispossessed. Case of the Inhabitants of Burnam.*

Tenants of customary lands and cotters and serfs who farmed plots on the demesne and elsewhere, who had neither leases nor copies, were evicted straight away.<sup>2</sup> Those whose holdings were too small without some rights of common or the opportunity to work on the demesne lands would of necessity be compelled to go when the demesne was enclosed to pasture or the commons enclosed.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A court established to deal with poor persons' complaints. See *Select Cases, Court of Requests* (Selden Society).

<sup>2</sup> See Leadam.

<sup>3</sup> Ashley, *Econ. Hist.* : "Of all forms of inclosure, it was the inclosure of the common fields which most vitally affected the medieval village economy."

A Court of Requests case of 1543, *Inhabitants of Burnam (Somersetshire) v. Richard Ffynes*, illustrates how tenants were deprived of their lands. The petitioning tenants, copyholders and freeholders, recite how they have enjoyed time out of mind a common known as the "brode warthe,"<sup>1</sup> and how from time out of mind several tenants have held small parcels of demesne lands by copy of court roll with common in the "overland." They continue: "So it is most gracious soueren lorde that sithe the sayd Richard ffines hathe sued liuerie owt of your graces handes of the said maner by means of sinistrie and ill counsell entendinge the vtter vndoinge of your said poor subiectes for a singular lucre and profite to him selfe and to one or twoe more at a courte there laitly holden hath not only discharged diverse of your saied subiectes of their overland granted unto them by the said Edwarde ffynes his father as shall & may apere by ther seuerall copies but also hathe taken from your said orators & other his freeholders the said common called the brode warthe & discharged them of the common in the same. And the same brode warthe entendithe for his own singular lucre and profit to dike and enclose & to make seuerall & to graunte & let the same to ferme & holy to expelle & exclude your pore subiectes their children & posterite<sup>2</sup> from ther lawfull common in the same contrare to equite & right & conscience." Cases such as these and many more before the Court of Star Chamber show that the commons at this time did not submit to a loss of all their rights without strong protest.

### 3. *Harrison describes the changed estate of the peasant.*

Harrison,<sup>3</sup> in his *Description of England*, in referring to the enclosure movement, writes: "They speake also of three things that are grown to be uerie grievous unto them, to wit, the inhansing of rents, latelie mentioned; the dailie oppression of copiholders, whose lords seeke to bring their poore tenants almost into plaine servitude and miserie, dailie devising new meanes, and seeking up all the old, how to cut

<sup>1</sup> Water meadow.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter VIII, par. 18, and Chapter IX, par. 11.

<sup>3</sup> William Harrison, B.D., Rector of Redwinter and Canon of Windsor, *Description of England*, 1577-87. Edited by F. J. Furnival.

them shorter and shorter, doubling, trebling and now and then seven times increasing their fines; driving them also for everie trifle to loose and forfeit their tenures, (by whome the greatest part of the realme dooth stand and is maintained), to the end they may fleece them yet more, which is a lamentable hering.”<sup>1</sup> And in an interesting passage he throws light on the changed circumstances of the peasant: “But to leave this lamentable discourse of so notable (and greevous) an inconvenience, growing (as I said) by incroching and joining of house to house, and land to land, whereby the inhabitants of manie places of our countrie are devoured and eaten up and their houses either altogether pulled down or suffered to decaie by little and little, although sometime a poore man peradventure dooth dwell in one of them,—who, not being able to repaire it, suffereth it to fall down,—and thereto thinketh himself verie friendlie dealt withall, if he may have an acre of ground assigned unto him whereon to keepe a cow, or wherein to set cabbages, radishes, parsneps, carrets, melons, pompons, or such like stuffe, by which he and his poore householde liveth as by their principall food, sith they can doo no better. And as for wheaten bread, they eat it when they can reach unto the price of it, contenting themselves in the meane time with bread made of otes or barleie; a poore estate Got wot! Howbeit, what care our great incrochers? But in divers places where rich men dwelled sometime in good tenements, there be now no houses at all, but hopyards, and sheads for poles, or peradventure gardens, as we may see in castell Hardingham, and diverse other Places.”

#### 4. *Risings in the west (1548-9).*

The reign of Edward VI opened with widespread discontent and risings resulting from enclosures and the rapacity of the lay landlords who had taken over Church estates.

Enclosures in the west seem to have been chiefly to arable, and the rising in Cornwall in 1548 was for the most part of a religious character, but “early in 1549 fresh uprisings were taking place in another section of the south-west, beginning

<sup>1</sup> Chapter XII, p. 242.

in Wiltshire and Somersetshire and thence spreading eastward. These seem to have been animated in large measure by hostility to inclosures of parks and commons, but there are signs in Hampshire, as in the midland movement, of Papist stirrings.”<sup>1</sup> There is a reference to this rising in a letter<sup>2</sup> of John Paston of May 25, 1549 to the Earl of Rutland: “Ther ys a gret number of the commonse uppe abowte Salssebury in Wylleshere and they have pluckyd downe Sir Wyllyam Harberde’s parke that ys abowte hys new howse, and dyverse other parkysse and commonse that be inclosyd in that cuntre, but harme they doo too parson (*nobody*). They saye thay wylle obaye the Kynges maister and my lord Protector with alle the counselle, but thay saye thaye wyll not have ther commonse and ther growendes to be inclosyd and soo taken from them.”

5. *Somerset’s anti-enclosure proclamation. Loss of common rights causes rising in eastern counties.*

In 1548 Somerset issued a Proclamation against Enclosures and appointed Commissioners to inquire into the matter. Shortly after the Commissioners started on their work there were enclosure riots in Buckinghamshire and other parts of the country, accompanied by a levelling of fences and ploughing up of parks, and in Kent 500 villagers levelled the fences of an enclosure made by the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports.<sup>3</sup>

In 1549 the eastern counties rose under Robert Ket, a wealthy man who himself possessed several manors. Somerset, in a letter to the English Ambassador at the Court of Charles V, said that he was unable to say whether this rising were due to the dissolution of the monasteries, game preserves, or enclosures of commons.<sup>4</sup> But though enclosures were not specifically mentioned in the rebels’ demands, there is little doubt that agrarian troubles were at the bottom of the rising, for “in the eastern counties the tenacious opposition to change was directed not to the conservation of the familiar church ceremonial, but to the perservation of long exercised common rights.”<sup>5</sup> Thomas Lever in 1550 said: “The greatest

<sup>1</sup> Gay, *Trans. R. Hist. Soc.*, N.S., vol. xviii.

<sup>2</sup> Hist. MSS., Comm. XII, iv, 36, Rutland MSS.

<sup>3</sup> *Spanish Chron. of Henry VIII*, ed. Hume, 169.

<sup>4</sup> Garnier.

<sup>5</sup> Gay.

griefe that hathe been unto the people in thys realme, has bene the inclosing of the commons.”<sup>1</sup>

**6. John Hales's Defence. Difficulties encountered by Commissioners. Government ignored.**

John Hales, a member of Somerset's Enclosure Commission, gives us some first-hand information as to the difficulties encountered by the Commissioners, and incidentally throws considerable light on the results of Henry VIII's measures against enclosers and the incompleteness of the figures of the earlier Commission. In his Defence<sup>2</sup> to the Council, written from Coventry in September 1549, he says: "They destroye Townes, they pull downe houses, they enclose poore mens commens and take awaye all ther lyvynges, and yet the Kynges Majestie and his Councell to refourme the state of the Realme, to restore it to his perfection, maye vse no alteration.

"After that the Kynges Majestie had sent forthe the proclamation and Commyssion, what dyd they not to hynder it? Somme founde the meanes to have ther servantes sworne in the Juryes, to thyntent to have them hasarde ther soules to save ther gredynes. And as I have lernyd syns, it is not possible in any of the Shires wher we wer, to make a Jurye without them, suche is the multytude of Reteynours and hangers on. . . . Somme poore men were thretened to be put from ther holdes if they presented, somme also as I further lerned have no certentie of ther holdes which were wonte to be letten by Copie for lyfes and otherwise for yeares, because they at no tyme nor in nothyng shulde offende ther landlodes, but do and saye what soever they will commaund them. . . . Somme also were Indicted because they presented the truthe, and somme were persuaded that thende of the Commyssion shulde but a monye matter, as it had byn in tyme paste.<sup>3</sup>

"Somme of the Ritchemen assone as they had the pardon, they retourned to ther olde vomyte, they beganne immedyatlie to enclose, to take awaye the poore mens Commens, and

<sup>1</sup> *Sermon in the Shroudes*, 1550. Arber reprint, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of P.C. and Miscellany, Lansdowne MSS. 238, f. 292.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Commission of 1517-18; see also Chapter VIII, par. 10.

wer more gredie, then they wer before. They thought and some saied, that the Commission was but a storme for a tyme and soon wolde passe over as a great many hoope it will also do nowe."

Hales goes on to refer to the three Bills he sent to Parliament—a Parliament of landlords—and says it was as if "the lambe had byn commytted to the wolfe to custodie"; and in considering whether the peasants and their supporters were to blame for the risings, he likens Parliament to a physician who does nothing to help a patient, and asks: "Who is the cause of this frenesie and sedition, eyther the syckeman and those that laboureth for the syckman to the physycyan or the physycyan himself?"

#### 7. *Strype corroborates Hales.*

Strype,<sup>1</sup> writing in 1549, quotes John Hales's Defence and corroborates the statements therein. He tells how Hales asked the King to pardon the rich enclosers as well as the poor who had revolted, with what result we know from Hales himself. He says that enclosures were nothing new, but had been going on for sixty years. "These were great graziers and sheepmasters, that ceased tilling the ground and sowing of corn; pulling down houses, and destroying whole towns, that so they might have the more land for grazing, and the less charge of poor tenants, who had dependance on them as their ploughmen and husbandmen. Whereby the poor countrymen being driven to great poverty, began thus to shew their discontents."<sup>2</sup>

#### 8. *Statute of Merton re-enacted. Complaints against enclosures and depopulation continue.*

Somerset's anti-enclosure proclamation was followed by a re-enactment of the Statute of Merton. With reference to this re-enactment Gonner says: "The new statute reads like the definite reassertion of a right, which otherwise might have been deemed in suspense owing to Somerset's proclamation."<sup>3</sup> He adds that it may be also due "in part to a

<sup>1</sup> *Memorials Eccles of Edward VI.*, vol. ii (1), ch. xxi, p. 268.

<sup>2</sup> P. 260.

<sup>3</sup> Gonner, *Common Land and Inclosures*, p. 51.

desire to introduce new arable in the place of that which had been converted to pasture.”<sup>1</sup> There seems little doubt, however, that approvement was continuing<sup>2</sup> and that the Council of Landlords wished the statute to be emphasized by a re-enactment.

Latimer frequently denounced the enclosers in his sermons. He described how his father's farm had increased in rent from £3 to £4 per annum to £16, and how, in consequence, the farmer had been reduced to poverty.

One John Higgins<sup>3</sup> in 1550 was indicted at Hereford for inciting others to break up enclosures, saying that by the King's proclamation all enclosures were to be broken up.

In Wyatt's rebellion in 1554 there were some complaints of enclosure of pastures, and from the Midland counties there were frequent complaints of enclosures of open fields causing depopulation.

9. *Enclosure to pasture slackens, but enclosures and depopulations continue throughout reign of Elizabeth.*

It seems probable that towards the end of the sixteenth century enclosing to pasture slackened off, and enclosures began to consist more of a consolidation of strips in the open fields and enclosure for arable.<sup>4</sup> Pasture was becoming less profitable, and there was a demand for foodstuffs, and these factors, and a growing movement to improve arable husbandry, would account for the gradual change in the direction of the enclosure movement. Enclosures, however, still continued, and there were frequent small disturbances throughout Elizabeth's reign, and in Oxford during the scarcity of 1596 there was considerable feeling against enclosers.<sup>5</sup>

Harrison, in his *Description of England*, deplores the progress of enclosures and the great extent to which tillage has

<sup>1</sup> P. 119.

<sup>2</sup> FitzHerbert, *Surveying*, p. 20: "The lords have inclosed a great part of the waste grounds."

<sup>3</sup> Hist. MSS. Comm. XIII, iv, 317.

<sup>4</sup> Gonner: "In the sixteenth century . . . the skilful farmer wishes to be freed from his slovenly or less skilled neighbours. From FitzHerbert on there is a constant succession of writers advocating inclosure from the farming point of view."

<sup>5</sup> Cal. S. P. Dom., Eliz., vol. iv, ff. 316, 343, 345.



decayed. In 1592, in order to satisfy the land hunger to some extent, it was enacted that no labourer's cottage should be erected without 4 acres of land being attached. In 1576 it was stated by one Alderman Box<sup>1</sup> that "the fourth part of the ground that some time was agreeable in this realm to maintain the plough to breed corn is now in pasture to maintain sheep."

The preamble to the Act 39 Eliz., cap. 2 (1597-8) states: "Since which time (*when the tillage laws were dropped in 1594*) there have grown many more depopulations by turning tillage into pasture than at any time for the like number of years heretofore"; and in a letter<sup>2</sup> from Sir Anthony Cope to Lord Burleigh concerning depopulation we find: "who, being driven out of their habitations, are forced into the great cities, where, being very burdensome, they shut their doors against them,<sup>3</sup> suffering them to die in the streets and highways."

**10. Great decay of tillage since Domesday—sixteenth-century writers do not exaggerate.**

We must now investigate a little more closely the result of the enclosures of the sixteenth century, and see what measures were taken by the Government at various periods to combat the evil results.

It has already been seen that there is strong evidence for the belief that at the time of Domesday there was a very large area of the country under the plough, amounting in several counties to one-half and more of the area of the county. If we do not bear this in mind, but only consider the amount of open-field land in England in the eighteenth century, it might be thought that those writers who bewailed enclosures in the sixteenth century were exaggerating when they spoke of the great decay of tillage. But taking note of the probable area of arable land in the reign of the Conqueror, it becomes evident that these sixteenth-century writers had good cause for deploring the decay of tillage and the turning of arable to pasture. From the time of the Black Death onwards a very large area must have been turned to

<sup>1</sup> Lansdowne MSS. CXXXI, 2., f. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 83, f. 68.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter X, par. 19.

grass from arable or enclosed from the waste as pasture-land. The Inquisition of 1517-18 shows how this was done, and the remarks of John Hales make it clear that the returns made by the two Commissions were incomplete.

Reliable men, therefore, like Sir Thomas More, Fitz-Herbert, Harrison, and John Hales, who spoke from experience and actual observation, do not seem to have been exaggerating when they deplored the widespread decay of tillage, for the decay had, in fact, been widespread, and, as we shall show later, has continued to the present day.

*11. The open-field village still predominant, but most accessible land monopolized and communal rights lost.*

With the exception of Kent and the south-west, the open-field village was still the commonest type at the close of the sixteenth century, and in the seventeenth century it is said that one-third of the country was still open and unenclosed.

Enclosures had not deprived the peasants of access to all the land in England, nor had all waste land and commons been enclosed, but the movement had resulted in the enclosure of a large area of common and waste land and also open arable land. In this way a great proportion of the land, which was sufficiently accessible to make it worth while to work, had become monopolized. As has been seen, in bringing this about, common rights, which were really the communal property in the land, were forcibly extinguished, and those who in law and equity had a right to remain on their holdings were evicted. Land-holding had by now become, in fact, practically land owning, and these communal rights were lost for all time.<sup>1</sup>

*12. Natural opportunities for employment artificially restricted, and no alternative employment for dispossessed.*

When arable land was enclosed and put down to grass, and the waste and commons were enclosed, a considerable lessening of the opportunities of employment resulted. When a villein or cotter was evicted or displaced, and his holding put down to grass or his common enclosed, the opportunities of employment on that manor were to that extent diminished ;

<sup>1</sup> See par. 2 and Chapter VIII, par. 18.

but when at the same time the lord and other freehold or copyhold tenants did the same, and also took in large stretches of the waste,<sup>1</sup> the evicted and displaced tenants found that no other easily accessible land was available, and they had to leave. The opportunities were, of course, there, as they were before, but access to them was denied.

The actual result, then, of the enclosures and consolidations was to deprive the community, as a whole, permanently of their interest in the land affected, to put it in the power of a much smaller number of men to say whether or no there should be access to the land, and to lessen to a very large extent the opportunities for employment and self-employment. Unless, therefore, at the same time as these men were driven from the country-side, there were sufficient jobs available to absorb them in industry,<sup>2</sup> we should expect to find widespread unemployment—unemployment, that is, in the sense of able-bodied men unable to find an employer or to get access to land to employ themselves.

### 13. *Advent of landless agricultural labourer. Great increase of beggars—savage repression.*

Ashley<sup>3</sup> speaks of the agrarian changes as having driven large numbers from their holdings, and in depriving the cotters<sup>4</sup> and other small tenants of their land and commons as having laid the foundation for the landless agricultural labourer.

Unemployed beggars, as has been seen, became a pest and a public danger in the reign of Henry VIII, and for some time they were all treated alike and harshly. Henry "strung up rogues apace," and by an Act of 1530 beggars able to work were to be whipped,<sup>5</sup> but a further Act of 1535 recited that

<sup>1</sup> Enclosure of waste to arable gave employment, but deprived community of common rights.

<sup>2</sup> Gonner, p. 384: "It is generally admitted that where conversion to pasture takes place to any great extent, there is risk of depopulation unless the loss of employment directly on the land is compensated for in other ways."

<sup>3</sup> *Econ. Hist.*, vol. i, bk. ii, ch. v.: "They deprived great numbers of the agricultural labouring class—small customary tenants and cottagers—of the means of support in their old places of abode, and sent them wandering over the country."

<sup>4</sup> Eden, *State of the Poor*: "I admit, however, that . . . the race of cottagers was going fast to decay."

<sup>5</sup> Sir T. More in *Utopia*: "Doubtless unless you find a remedy for these enormities, you shall in vain advance yourselves of executing justice upon felons."

the Act of 1530 had made no provision for setting the beggars to work or for giving relief. A statute of 1531<sup>1</sup> against vagrancy recites that "Vacabundes and Beggars have of long tyme increased and dayly do increase in great and excessyve nombres by the occasyon of ydelnes, mother and rote of all vyces"; and in an Act of 1534<sup>2</sup> we find "a merveyulous multitude and nombre of the people of this Realme be not able to provyde meate, drynke, and clothes necessary for theym selves, theire wyfes, and children, but be so discouraged with myserye and povertie that they fall dayly to thefte, robbery, and other inconvenience, or pitifully dye for hunger and colde." In this recital it seems to be realized that in the case of a great many people it is not their fault that they are starving.

There was a savage Act against vagrants in the first year of Edward VI which was repealed by 3 and 4 Edward VI. But in spite of this and other repressive legislation, vagrancy continued to increase and to worry the Government; and while the Government's endeavours to prevent the drain and evictions from the country-side were unsuccessful, "it was no earthly use for the legislature to insist merely that all these wandering impostors must work—the difficulty was to find them any work to do."<sup>3</sup>

#### 14. *Vagrancy increases and repression fails.*

In spite of harsh and repressive measures and imprisonings of vagrants, unemployment continued and increased throughout the reign of Elizabeth. Harrison,<sup>4</sup> writing of the years 1577–87, said: "It is not yet full threescore years since this trade<sup>5</sup> began, but how it hath prospered since that time, it is easie to judge, for they are now supposed of one sex and another, to amount unto above 10,000<sup>6</sup> persons, as I have heard reported." A statute of 1572<sup>7</sup> punished vagrants, but made some provision for the relief of "Poore and Impotent."

The repressive work of the courts, however, seems to have had some temporary effect, for in 1575 Stow writes: "By

<sup>1</sup> 22 Henry VIII, cap. 12.

<sup>2</sup> 25 Henry VIII, cap. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Garnier.

<sup>4</sup> Chapter X, p. 218.

<sup>5</sup> Begging.

<sup>6</sup> This seems to be a conservative estimate.

<sup>7</sup> 14 Eliz.

the care of Fleetwood the Recorder, and the other Magistrates, there were few or no Rogues and Thieves in Gaol." From Strype, however, we learn that "about the year 1593, and before, the City, as well as other Parts of the Kingdom, was grievously pestered with Beggars; and they many of them poor disbanded soldiers, become poor and maimed by the wars in the Low Countries, and with Spain; and many more that pretended themselves to be so who committed many Robberies and Outrages." A letter written to the Lord Treasurer in 1596 by a Somersetshire Justice of the Peace refers to large numbers of lazy vagrants and robbers.

In Hales's pamphlet, published in 1581, which consists of a dialogue between a husbandman, a manufacturer, a merchant, a knight, and a doctor, the husbandman complains "that arable land is enclosed and turned into pasture, that rents are raised and labour unemployed."

#### 15. *Statute of Apprentices—Justices to regulate wages. Wages fall.*

Gonner speaks of town labour, which "tended to withdraw people from agricultural labour," but the towns held out no great attractions at this period, and we have already seen that the withdrawing from agricultural labour was chiefly compulsory. There is little doubt either that the clauses of the Statute of Apprentices, 1563, seeking to compel workers to assist in harvesting, etc., were not inserted by reason of any shortage of labour, for the evidence is abundant that there was great unemployment at this time, but merely copied those statutes which had previously ordered the unemployed to obtain work.

The preamble <sup>1</sup> to this Act deplored the current low wages and high prices, and to remedy this state of affairs justices were to limit and appoint the wages for every kind of manual labour. But as those appointed to assess the wages were usually those interested in keeping wages down, and as there was a surplus of unemployed labour, wages fell.

<sup>1</sup> "Chiefly for that the wages and allowances limited and rated in many of the said Statutes are in divers places too small and not answerable to this time respecting the advancement of prices of all things, belonging to the said servants and labourers."

16. *Government tackles the pauper problem. Poor Law Act, 1601.*

The army of unemployed, which had been steadily growing, finally brought about the great Poor Law Act of 1601.<sup>1</sup> This statute continued punishments for those who would not work, but provided relief for the sick and impotent poor and work for the genuine unemployed. In order to administer this comprehensive scheme, the Act provided for the levying of rates on parishioners for the upkeep of the poor and the work-houses. Thus we see that the State, having countenanced a policy which drove peasants off the land and caused unemployment, was compelled to levy rates on householders to maintain the unemployed, to "make work" for them because they had been denied access to the natural opportunities for employment. As has been well said, the pauper was to be "quartered on the occupier."

17. *Harrison deplores increase of game and parks. Enclosures have filled land with beggars.*

Harrison gives a striking account of the increase of coney warrens, game preserves and parks during Elizabeth's reign, and also of the destruction of houses of which he speaks of his own experience: "Where in times past, manie large and wealthie occupiers were dwelling within the compasse of some one parke, and thereby great plentie of corne and cattell seene, and to be had among them, beside a more copious procreation of humane issue, whereby the realme was alwaies better furnished with able men to serve the prince in his affaires; now there is almost nothing kept but a sort of wild and savage beasts, cherished for pleasure and delight; and yet some owner, still desirous to inlarge those grounds, [as either for the breed and feeding of cattell,] doo not let dailie to take in more, [not sparing the verie commons wherupon manie townships now and then doo live] affirming that we have alreadie too great store of people in England; and that youth by marrieng too soone doo nothing profit the countrie, but fill it full of beggars, [to the hurt and utter undoing (they saie) of the commonwealth]. Certes, if it be not one curse

<sup>1</sup> 43 Eliz., cap. 3.

of the Lord, to have our countrie converted in such sort, from the furniture of mankind into the walks and shrowds of wild beasts, I know not what is anie. How manie families also these great and small games (for so most keepers call them) have eaten up, and are likelie hereafter to devoure, some men may conjecture, but manie more lament, sith there is no hope of restraint to be looked for in this behalf, [because the corruption is so generall]. But if a man may presentlie give a ghesse . . . he shall saie at the last, that the twentieth part of the realme is imployed upon deere and conies alreadie, which seemeth verie much, if it be dylie considered of." <sup>1</sup>

18. *No question of over-population until enclosure movement.  
Access to the land denied.*

It is interesting to note how Harrison refers to those who think that over-population is the cause of the poverty and unemployment,<sup>2</sup> and one would imagine from what he says that he had a shrewd idea as to the cause of the unemployment—namely, the enclosure movement and evictions from the country-side. His statements might be compared with the pessimistic writings of a parson <sup>3</sup> of a later generation and the utterances of a certain Dean of our own times.

There does not seem to have been any talk of over-population before the enclosure movement started, but as soon as the unemployed appeared and the beggars came to town there have always been those ready to argue that if these unemployed had not been born there would have been no unemployed. The fallacy here can be readily appreciated when we know that these men were driven from the land where they had employment, that the natural opportunities which once afforded them employment still existed, and that they could have been employed again had they, or even some of them, been able to get back there.

<sup>1</sup> Harrison, ch. xix, 306-7.

<sup>2</sup> "Some also doo grudge at the great increase of people in these days, thinking a necessarie brood of cattell farre better than a superfluous augmentation of mankind . . . But if it should come to passe that any forren invasion should be mayde . . . then should these men find that a wall of men is farre better than stackes of corne and bags of monie."

<sup>3</sup> Malthus.

**19. Thorold Rogers and cause of sixteenth-century poverty.**  
*Pauperism before debasement of coinage. Regulation of wages inoperative until assisted by economic force.*

Thorold Rogers<sup>1</sup> attributes the misery and poverty in the sixteenth century to (1) the issue of base money by Henry VIII in 1543; (2) the confiscation of the guild funds; and (3) the regulation of wages by justices, which was first begun by the statute 5 Eliz., cap. 4. Writing of this act, he says: "This expedient was at last successful, and was the third in the set of causes from which pauperism was the inevitable effect. . . . Had, however, the first two acts to which I have so often referred not been committed, the third would have, I am persuaded, been nugatory. It was nothing more than had been enacted in the reign of Henry IV,<sup>2</sup> and had been wholly inoperative, at any rate in the direction which it was intended to take—the reduction of agricultural wages—for these, as we have seen, improve after the enactment."

Rogers here seems to lose sight of the reason why the Statute of Labourers was inoperative—namely, because there was nothing in the way of labour's access to the land, and opportunities for employment far exceeded the supply of labour. Had he remembered this, he might have seen that, even had there been no debasement of the coinage and no confiscation of guild funds, the economic force of a surplus of workers seeking employment, where the opportunities of employment have been artificially restricted, would of itself cause low wages. Given two men after one job and no alternative employment, it will not be necessary to look to any statute to see why the wages of the one employed are low or why the other is unemployed. And if the pauperism of the sixteenth century was due to these three causes, it may be asked what it was that caused the pauperism and unemployment in the reign of Henry VII and early years of the sixteenth century, before the coinage was debased or the guild funds confiscated?

<sup>1</sup> *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*, p. 353.

<sup>2</sup> Statute of Labourers.



**20. *Debasement of coinage in earlier period did not cause high prices and unemployment. Elizabeth reforms the currency.***

Without denying that the debasement of the coinage and confiscation of benefit funds would cause hardship, it is difficult to see how they could have caused unemployment if access to the land had remained unrestricted. It is, too, a curious fact that there had been a previous debasement of the coinage, which, according to Rogers,<sup>1</sup> was followed by no bad results. He admits that he can only explain this on the ground that payments were made by weight and not by tale, and, writing of the debasement of 1543, he says: "Whether payments were made by weight or not before the debasement, they were certainly made by tale speedily afterwards, and when Elizabeth reformed the currency, the new system, to her evident disappointment, was permanently adopted."

Elizabeth reformed the currency <sup>2</sup> in 1560, and referring to this Rogers says: "Its nominal value is said to have been a little more than £638,000, which gives an additional illustration to my theory that payments were made by weight and not by tale. The actual amount of sterling silver contained in the mixture was 244,416 lb. . . . Elizabeth coined £733,248 in the new coinage out of the silver she refined." If, as Rogers says, payments were formerly made by weight, this certainly supports his view, and would also seem to show that payments were still being made by weight in 1560; so that if this is so, there is no reason why the debasement of 1547 should have been any more harmful than that of Edward IV.

As Rogers said: "Henry and his son had at last, though unwittingly, given effect to the Statute of Labourers," but it was the enclosure movement that had made it possible for them to do this.

<sup>1</sup> P. 341: "It has been stated before that at various periods of English history the English sovereigns lessened the weight of the unit, the silver penny, till, in the year 1464, the penny of Edward IV was almost exactly half the weight of the penny of Edward I. It is remarkable that, notwithstanding these successive diminutions, no effect is traceable in the price of commodities, and no discontent is expressed at the action of the Crown. If anything, after the last change, commodities became cheaper."

<sup>2</sup> The average debasement was 60 %, or a little more than 7 oz. in 12 (Rogers).



## PART II

### CHAPTER X

#### THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY—MODERN CONDITIONS BEGIN

Improved arable culture in seventeenth century; enclosure of wastes—Conversion to pasture in Midlands—Enclosures by agreement confirmed by Chancery Decree—Instructions to Council of North—Midland Rising, 1607—The Enclosure Proclamation; action against offenders—Government Commission; Returns show widespread movement—House of Lords and poverty—Council and justices agree depopulation due to enclosure and conversion—Winstanley and the Diggers; poverty due to withholding of land from use—Diggers cultivate waste land—Declaration of poor of Wellingborrow—Edward Sexby speaks for private soldier—Law of Settlement, 1662; agricultural labourer a landless serf—Depopulation increases poor rates—Contemporary evidence—Lupton's satire—Repeal of tillage laws—Law of Settlement and decay of cottages; tendency to large-scale farming—Dispossessed drift to towns; measures taken by towns—Insecurity of tenure prevents improvements—Rents and prices rise, wages fall—Gregory King's statistics.

#### 1. *Improved arable culture in seventeenth century and enclosure of wastes.*

ENCLOSURES continued throughout the seventeenth century, but their purpose was to some extent different from what it had formerly been. The movement which we saw beginning during the latter part of the sixteenth century, enclosing to arable for improved cultivation, continued to progress, and with it there was much ingrossing and consolidation of farms. "Arable agriculture enters on a period of progress, and new methods of cultivation are within the power of the careful and enlightened tenant."<sup>1</sup> Houghton,<sup>2</sup> writing at the end of the century, speaks of enclosure on light lands, as, for example, the sands of Norfolk, where new grasses and root

<sup>1</sup> Gonner, p. 326.

<sup>2</sup> Houghton edited a weekly paper with articles on agriculture, etc., 1691–1702.

crops<sup>1</sup> flourished, and also states that the growth of agriculture was then leading to even more extensive enclosures than formerly.

There was also much enclosure of waste land during this century, especially in Cornwall<sup>1</sup> and the west, and in Cornwall and Devonshire<sup>2</sup> enclosures had probably proceeded farther than in any other county.

## 2. *Much conversion to pasture, especially in Midlands.*

In addition to this enclosure to arable there was much enclosure and conversion to pasture for sheep and dairy-farming, especially in the Midlands. "Thus in the third place, where conversion is a feature, it probably takes place far more thoroughly<sup>3</sup> and uniformly than was previously the case. . . . In particular, a part of the Midlands is turned more and more to pasture, and in the east, land begins to bear its present aspect in respect of grain. Taking the compositions for depopulation for the years 1635-8, the only counties where these bear a high proportion to area are, in their order, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Rutlandshire, Hampshire and Lincolnshire. Very much below them stand Hertfordshire and Nottinghamshire, while in the other counties mentioned these payments are insignificant!"<sup>4</sup> The increase in the price of cattle during this century would probably contribute to the extension of pasture and grazing.

## 3. *Enclosure by agreement confirmed by Chancery Decree widespread.*

The method of effecting enclosures during the seventeenth century was usually by agreement confirmed by Chancery Decree and sometimes by Act of Parliament. But probably the largest areas dealt with were enclosed by so-called agree-

<sup>1</sup> Carew in a book on Cornwall dated 1600, quoted by Slater.

<sup>2</sup> Leland in 1537 found no "champaigne," or open land, in Devonshire or Cornwall.

<sup>3</sup> Gonner, p. 139: "Thus we hear that inclosure is worse than in the time of Henry VII, and the sheep figures as a destroyer of farms and devourer of men in the pages of various writers. Further, the proceedings of the Privy Council with letters to the Sheriffs, and the levy of compositions, emphasize the anxiety."

<sup>4</sup> Id., p. 328.

ment confirmed by a Chancery Decree. The demesne land continued to form the subject of enclosure as well as the common fields and pasture, and we are told that many tenants enclosed their land piece by piece.<sup>1</sup>

As to agreement, there can be little doubt that a large landowner or farmer would have many ways of enforcing agreement amongst the small holders, and we have evidence of several collusive actions<sup>2</sup> in Chancery to compel dissentients to agree. Poor tenants would have little chance to appear in London and maintain their claims, and if they took such action, it would be likely to result in their eviction.

With reference to these Chancery Decrees, Miss Leonard says: "The Inclosure decrees and Awards of the Courts of Westminster are not indexed, but after months of searching I feel justified in asserting that these decrees were more numerous than has been usually supposed, and that they refer to many different parts of the country—to Yorkshire and Warwickshire as well as to Leicestershire and Northamptonshire, to Hampshire and Oxfordshire as well as to Lincolnshire and Huntingdonshire."<sup>3</sup> Dealing in detail with the county of Durham, she shows that between 1634 and 1700 about 4 % of the area of the county (25,000 acres common fields and 3,518 acres common pasture) was affected by agreements and decrees, and from 1585 about 6½ % of the area.

#### 4. *Instructions to Council of the North concerning depopulation.*

Depopulation of the country-side and the increase of vagrancy continued to trouble the Government, for the Poor Law Act of 1601 was only a palliative, and made no pretence at striking at the cause of the trouble.

The Instructions to the President and Council of the North in 1603 again dealt with enclosures, in the following terms: "Further our pleasure is that the said Lord President and Council shall from time to time make diligent and effectual inquisition of the wrongful taking in of commons and other

<sup>1</sup> Leonard, "The Inclosure of Common Fields in the Seventeenth Century," *Trans. R. Hist. Soc.*, 1905, N.S., vol. xix.

<sup>2</sup> P.C. Register VII, ch. i, pp. 506-7; P.C. Register X, 197 (October 31, 1634).

<sup>3</sup> *Trans. R. Hist. Soc.*, N.S. vol. xix.

grounds and the decay of tillage and of towns or houses of husbandry contrary to the laws . . . and leaving all respects and affections apart they shall take such order for redress of enormities used in the same as the poor people be not oppressed and forced to go begging.”<sup>1</sup>

### 5. *The Midland Rising* (1607).

In 1604 the people of Northamptonshire, through Sir Edward Montague, a county member, complained of the “depopulation and daily excessive conversion of tillage into pasture.” According to Professor Gay,<sup>2</sup> “Sir Edward, though himself impressed with the inconvenience of the open-field husbandry, in reporting these complaints to Parliament, said that the ‘cry of the county’ had ‘so strongly enjoined’ him that he could do no less than present this request to the ‘consideration of your wisdomes.’”<sup>3</sup>

Enclosure and conversion in this county and in the Midlands generally continued, and feeling at last became so strong that in June 1607 there was a fairly widespread rising in those counties against enclosures. This rising began in Northamptonshire. The Earl of Shrewsbury, writing<sup>4</sup> to the Earl of Kent, June 2, 1607, said: “They answered, that if the sayd sheriff and Justices wolde acquaynt his Ma<sup>tie</sup> that the cause of theyr rysing was oute of no vndutifull mynde to his Ma<sup>tie</sup> but only for reformation of thos late inclosures w<sup>ch</sup> made them of y<sup>e</sup> porest sorte redde to pyne for wante, and y<sup>t</sup> they myght heare answere from his Ma<sup>tie</sup> within vi dayes and that his H<sup>s</sup> wolde promis to reforme thos abyses, they wolde then all departe home, and rely upon his Ma<sup>tie</sup> promis and performance thereof &c.” He goes on to say that if he had been dealing with the matter, he would not have parleyed with “such insolent base and rebellious people,” and that force should have been used against them if they had not returned home instantly.

This rising was speedily repressed, and we learn from a

<sup>1</sup> XXVIII.

<sup>2</sup> “The Midland Revolt and the Inquisition of Depopulation in 1607,” *Trans. R. Hist. Soc.*, N.S., vol. xviii.

<sup>3</sup> See Hist. MSS. Comm., MSS. of Lord Montague of Beaulieu, 42.

<sup>4</sup> Lansdowne MSS., 90, f. 23.

parish register entry<sup>1</sup> by Thomas Cox, Rector of Addington Magna, dated June 8, that "many were taken prisoners, who afterwards were hanged and quartered, and their quarters set up at Northampton, Oundle, Thrapston, and other places."

6. *The Enclosure Proclamation—action to be taken against offenders.*

On June 28, 1607, there was issued an Enclosure Proclamation<sup>2</sup> in which the blame for the continuance of depopulating enclosures is put on the people who "have been wanting to themselves in the due and ordinary meanes which they ought to take, by presentment of, such as are or have bene guilty of these oppressions." He must indeed have been a bold man who would present his landlord as an encloser at this time, and, as has been shown, there is considerable evidence that those who did present were harshly treated, and that fear of eviction kept large numbers from presenting. It was, moreover, the continued failure of presentment and of the Government to bring any redress to the peasants that brought about the rising.

The Proclamation states, however, that the judges had been assembled to discover enclosure offenders and "to consider how farre they may be touched in law, and in what course, and accordingly to proceed against them with all severitie."

7. *Government appoints a Commission. Returns show widespread movement.*

Following this Proclamation the Government set up another Commission to inquire into the enclosure and conversion of arable land. The instructions issued did not mention the enclosure of waste and pasture, but there are some presentments for such enclosures and also for the conversion of arable land apart from enclosure. The Returns<sup>3</sup> supply the acreage converted and the acreage severed, this latter term apparently referring to cases where land was severed from farm-houses, resulting in the decay of the houses. Lands

<sup>1</sup> Bridges, *Northamptonshire*, ii, 206.

<sup>2</sup> Rot. Pat., 5 James I.

<sup>3</sup> See *Trans. R. Hist. Soc.*, N.S., vol. xviii, 1904.

severed would thus form part of an ingrossing and consolidating scheme.<sup>1</sup>

The Returns comprise the counties of Warwickshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire, and date back to 1578. In comparing the five counties returned in 1517 and 1607, the percentage of the acreage returned to the total acreage of the counties was respectively 1·72 % and 2·46 %. The acreage represented in 1607 was 69,758 acres scattered among 393 places, thus showing that the movement was a general one throughout the Midlands. But again we hear of the intimidation of jurors and witnesses, which would account for the incomplete character of the Returns.

The figures for the six counties <sup>2</sup> are as follows :

*Warwickshire*.—Area affected, 5,373 acres, of which

Converted	..	..	..	4,973 acres
Severed	..	..	..	400 acres
Houses decayed	..	..	..	88
Persons displaced	..	..	..	33

*Leicestershire*.—Area affected, 12,290 acres, of which

Converted	..	..	..	9,005 acres
Severed	..	..	..	3,285 acres
Houses decayed	..	..	..	172
Persons displaced	..	..	..	120

*Northamptonshire*.—Area affected, 27,335 acres, of which

Converted	..	..	..	10,746 acres
Severed	..	..	..	13,056 acres
Houses decayed	..	..	..	358
Persons displaced	..	..	..	1,444

*Buckinghamshire*.—Area affected, 7,077 acres, of which

Converted	..	..	..	3,532 acres
Severed	..	..	..	3,355 acres
Houses decayed	..	..	..	80
Persons displaced	..	..	..	86

*Bedfordshire*.—Area affected, 10,004 acres, of which

Converted	..	..	..	2,852 acres
Severed	..	..	..	6,687 acres
Houses decayed	..	..	..	122
Persons displaced	..	..	..	259

<sup>1</sup> In Northamptonshire *open-field* farms varied from £50 to £150 a year, in newly enclosed parishes from £100 to £300 a year, and in old enclosed parishes up to £500; in South Wilts common field farms £18 to £25 a year, and enclosed farms £100 to £300 (Leonard, *Trans. R. Hist. Soc.*, N.S., vol. xix).

<sup>2</sup> The movement was not confined to these counties. Dr. Gay quotes Bateson, *Northumberland*: At Newham there were "expelled seventeen score men, women and children all upon one day."



*Huntingdonshire*.—Area affected, 7,677 acres, of which

Converted	..	..	..	3,798 acres
Severed ..	..	..	..	3,870 acres
Houses decayed	..	..	..	146
Persons displaced	..	..	..	290

8. *House of Lords finds poverty due to ingrossing and over-population.*

On July 5, 1607, the House of Lords published a "Consideration" <sup>1</sup> of the cause of depopulation, and it is interesting to note their conclusions and suggested remedies: "Ingrossinge beinge truly the disease and not conuertinge wiche may be iustified for. . . . By redressinge the fault of Depopulation and Leaueing encloseinge, and conuertinge arbitrabl as in other shires the poore man shall be satisfied in His ende; Habitation; and the gentleman not Hindred in his desier: Improvement. But as thear is now a Labour to sute out Dwellinges for as much stocke of people as the Comon Wealth will beare it must likewise be fitt, as good husbandes doe withe their groundes to provide that you doe not over burthen it. But as they doe w<sup>th</sup> their increase remove them to other places: soe must the State either by transferring to the Warres or deduceinge of *Colonies* vent the daylie encrease that ells will surcharge the State; ffor if in London a place more contagious then the Countreye the nomber of Cristenings doth weekly by 40 excede the burialls, and that the Countries proportionally doth equall if not outgoe that rate, It cannot be but that in this State, as in a full bodie theare must breake out yearly tumors and Impostures as did of late." <sup>2</sup>

Thus it will be readily seen that the Commons had little chance of any real redress of grievances from such a body as this. The Lords calmly say that the gentleman should have his desire—improvement, which meant an increase of rent, but that the so-called surplus population should be shipped off to the Colonies or the wars. They seem to have overlooked the fact that the dispossessed who revolted had been robbed

<sup>1</sup> "A consideration of the cause in question before the Lords touchinge depopulation."—Cottonian MSS., Brit. Museum (quoted by W. Cunningham, D.D., *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, vol. i).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the view taken by the Council; see par. 9.

of their holdings, and but for this would still have been in employment.

9. *Complaints continue. Council instruct justices to take action. Council and justices agree that depopulation results from enclosure and conversion.*

As in previous times, the Government's measures against enclosers seem to have had little effect, for in 1630, in consequence of continued complaints from the Midlands, the Council have to instruct the justices of several counties to remove the enclosures of the previous two years. Writing to the justices in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire the Council say: <sup>1</sup> "There appeares many great inclosures . . . all w<sup>ch</sup> are or are lyke to turne to the conversion of much ground from errable to pasture and be very hurtfull to the commonwealth although they beare a fayre shewe of satisfacon to all parties who are concerned in those grounds inclosed. But wee well know w<sup>th</sup> all what y<sup>e</sup> consequence will be, and in conclusion all turne to depopulacion." <sup>2</sup>

In replying to similar letters from the Council, the justices of Norfolk write: "Most Honora<sup>ble</sup>; Wee have caused a view <sup>3</sup> to bee made according to yo<sup>r</sup> lo<sup>ps</sup> late lres of all inclosures & conv<sup>s</sup>ions of arrable land to meadow and pasture w<sup>ch</sup> are now in hand or have beene made w<sup>th</sup> in two yeares last past. And wee have signified yo<sup>r</sup> lo<sup>is</sup> direcons unto such persons as are causers of any such inclosures & conv<sup>s</sup>ions & have given them notice that they ought not to proceede w<sup>th</sup> hedgeing or dytching in of any such grounds but to let them so rest untill wee shall have furdre orders from yo<sup>r</sup> hon<sup>ors</sup>. And wee further conceave that if depopulacons may bee reformed it will bring a great good to the whole Kingdom, for where houses are pulled downe the people are forced to seeke new habitations in other townes and cuntryes by meanes whereof those townes where they get a setling are pestred

<sup>1</sup> "These letters issued by the Privy Council show that the official opinion of the time coincided with that of the pamphleteers in the belief that as late as 1631 inclosure in the Midland Counties tended to depopulation even when all the commoners were well treated" (Leonard, *Trans. R. Hist. Soc.*, N.S., vol. xix).

<sup>2</sup> *Trans. R. Hist. Soc.*, N.S., vol. xix; P.C. Register VI, f. 385, 1630.

<sup>3</sup> See S. P. Dom., Charles I, 1631 (vol. 206), 69-71.

so as they are hardly able to live one by an other and it is likewise the cause of erecting new cottages upon the waste & other places who are not able to relieve themselves nor any such townes able to sustaine or set them on worke w<sup>ch</sup> causes rogues and vagabondes to encrease. Moreover it doth appeare that in those townes w<sup>ch</sup> are depopulated the people beinge expelled there are few or none left to serve the King when souldjours are to be levyed to appeare at musters for his Mat<sup>s</sup> service w<sup>ch</sup> is also a cause that poore Townes where many people are, are put to greater charg in setting forth of souldjours & depopulated Townes are much eased and the subsidie decayed. All w<sup>ch</sup> wee humbly submit to yo<sup>r</sup> lo<sup>ps</sup> great wisdome." <sup>1</sup>

Other Commissions were appointed in 1632, 1635 and 1636 ; and in 1633 special instructions were given to Judges of Assize on the matter of enclosures, and they had to attend the Council and report their proceedings.<sup>2</sup>

#### 10. Winstanley and the Diggers. Poverty due to withholding of land from use.

The Digger movement, under the leadership of one Gerrard Winstanley, began about 1648, and is of interest in throwing light on the views held by a body of people of that time concerning the cause of poverty and unemployment. Winstanley, who had been a small trader in London, had lost his money by reason of the Civil War. We find something of his views in a pamphlet issued in 1649 entitled *The New Law of Righteousness*.<sup>3</sup> He held that the land belonged of right to all the people of England, and that no man should be denied access to land if he wished to work it. The buying and selling of the earth from one particular hand to another was the beginning of "particular interest," and the result of this was that he who had bought land was able to compel the landless man to work for him for low wages. The Norman

<sup>1</sup> S. P. Dom., Charles I, Vol. CLXXXV, No. 86 This is signed by ten justices.

<sup>2</sup> P.C. Register IX, f. 267, October 18, 1633.

<sup>3</sup> Jesus Coll. Lib., Oxford. This and other documents referring to the Digger movement are quoted in *The Digger Movement in the Days of the Commonwealth*, L. H. Berens.

Conquest had resulted in a robbery of the people of England of their rights in the soil, and that, and the gradual establishment of private property in land, had brought poverty to the country.

Among his practical proposals we find the following: "Divide England into three parts, scarce one part is manured. So that here is land enough to maintain all her children, yet many die of want, or live under a heavy burden of poverty all their days. And this misery the poor people have brought upon themselves by lifting up particular interest by their labours. . . . Let those that have hitherto had no land, and have been forced to rob and steal through poverty; henceforth let them quietly enjoy land to work upon, that everyone may enjoy the benefit of his Creation, and eat his own bread with the sweat of his own brows. For surely this particular propriety of mine and thine hath brought in all misery upon people. First, it hath occasioned people to steal one from another. Secondly it hath made laws to hang those who did steal. It tempts people to do an evil action, and then kills them for doing it.<sup>1</sup> Let all judge whether this be not a great evil."

### 11. *The Diggers start to cultivate waste land.*

Winstanley and his followers endeavoured to put their beliefs into practice by starting work on the wastes at St. George's Hill, Surrey, and elsewhere. At the former place they were harried, we are told, by the surrounding tenants at the instigation of the "gentlemen of the County," and some were fined and imprisoned. Arising out of this incident, Winstanley and others in 1649 sent an Appeal<sup>2</sup> to the House of Commons in the following terms: "The main thing that you should look upon is the land, which calls upon her children to be free from the entanglements of the Norman Taskmasters. For one third part lies waste and barren, and her children starve for want, in regard the Lords of Manors will not suffer the poor to manure it . . . let the Common People have the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sir T. More in *Utopia*.

<sup>2</sup> *King's Pamphlets*, Brit. Museum Press Mark E., 564.

Commons and Waste Lands set free to them from all Norman enslaving Lords of Manors." <sup>1</sup>

## 12. *Declaration of the poor of Wellingborrow.*

Some of the poor in Wellingborrow, Northamptonshire, had followed the example of the Surrey Diggers, and in a printed broadsheet,<sup>2</sup> dated March 12, 1649, there is a Declaration setting forth their policy. They say: "We find that no creature that ever God made was ever deprived of the benefit of the Earth, but Mankind. . . . We are in Wellingborrow in one parish 1169 persons that receive alms, as the Officers have made it appear at the Quarter Sessions last. We have made our case known to the Justices: the Justices have given order that the Town should raise a stock to set us on work, and that the Hundred should be enjoined to assist them. But as yet we see nothing is done, nor any man that goeth about it. We have spent all we have; our trading is decayed; our wives and children cry for bread. . . . If we steal, the Law will end our lives. Divers of the poor are starved to death already; and it were better for us that are living to die by the Sword than by the Famine. And now we consider that the Earth is our Mother; and that God hath given it to the children of men; and that the Common and Waste Grounds belong to the poor; and that we have a right to the common ground both from the law of the Land, Reason, and Scriptures. Therefore we have begun to bestow our righteous labor upon it, and we shall trust the Spirit for a blessing upon our labor, resolving not to dig up any man's propriety until they freely give us it . . . some of those rich men amongst us that have had the greatest profit upon the Commons have freely given us their share in it . . . and the country farmers have profered, divers of them, to give us seed to sow it. . . . And truly those that we find against us have been constant enemies to the Parliament Cause from first to last." News of the activities of these Diggers reached the Council of State, and word was sent to a Justice of the Peace

<sup>1</sup> General Fairfax, who visited St. George's Hill in May 1649, said: "They carry themselves civilly and fairly in the country, and have the report of sober, honest men" (Brit. Museum Press Mark E., 530).

<sup>2</sup> Brit. Museum, under Wellingborrow. Press Mark, S. Sh., fol. 669, f. 15(21).

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for the County: "Let those men be effectually proceeded against at the next Sessions, and if any that ought to be instrumental to bring them to punishment fail in their duty, signify the same to us, that we may require of them an account of their neglect." <sup>1</sup>

### 13. *Edward Sexby speaks for the private soldier, who owns no estate in the land.*

In the Army Council debate on the question of the right to vote, Edward Sexby,<sup>2</sup> a representative of the private soldiers, in reply to Ireton, said: "We have engaged in this Kingdom and ventured our lives, and it was all for this: to recover our birthrights and privileges as Englishmen; and by the arguments urged, there are none. There are many thousands of us soldiers that have ventured our lives, we have had little propriety in the Kingdom as to our estates, yet we have had a birthright. But it seems now that except a man hath a fixed estate in this Kingdom, he hath no right in this Kingdom. I wonder we were so deceived. If we had not a right to the Kingdom, we were mere mercenary soldiers."

### 14. *Law of Settlement, 1662, makes agricultural labourer a landless serf.*

The administration of the Poor Law Act of 1601 had been lax for several years,<sup>3</sup> and in 1630 a Commission was appointed to inquire into the administration of the Act, the justices being ordered to see to its due execution. Lords of manors and town authorities were also ordered to see that work was provided to relieve the poor.

In 1662<sup>4</sup> the Law of Settlement came into force—a law which aimed at keeping the labourer to the parish of his birth or residence, and preventing him from wandering in search of work.<sup>5</sup> If he did wander and came to another parish, he

<sup>1</sup> Cal. S. P. Dom., Green, p. 106, April 15, 1650.

<sup>2</sup> *Clarke Papers*, vol. i, pp. 322-3, 325.

<sup>3</sup> See Cunningham, *Growth, etc.*, vol. ii, p. 208.

<sup>4</sup> 13, 14 Charles II, cap. 12.

<sup>5</sup> "It interfered with the employment of the industrious and it chained the unemployed to districts where no work could be obtained" (Cunningham, p. 208).

could be removed within forty days to the place from whence he had come, if there were any danger of his becoming chargeable. Thus the agricultural labourer became "a serf without land—the most portentous phenomenon in agriculture."<sup>1</sup> Commenting on the results of this Act, Thorold Rogers says: "Those persons who possessed the whole of a parish took care, whenever they could, to pull down cottages on their estate and rely on labour from a distance. By this system they hired labour at quarter sessions rate—i.e. at factitiously low wages—while the parish of the man's residence had to supplement his wages and to bear all those contingencies which were enhanced by the labourer being constrained to travel a considerable distance to his work in all weathers. . . . The wealthy landowners clung to it with desperate tenacity, for it increased their rents at the expense of the occupier and the poor."<sup>2</sup>

### 15. *Depopulation increases poor rates.*

Enclosures and the consequent depopulation of the countryside frequently resulted in an increase of poor rates, not necessarily in the depopulated districts, but often in the neighbouring towns whither the dispossessed found their way. "The seventeenth-century complainants who lived in the agricultural and more thinly populated districts traced the effect of inclosures too clearly to imagine that the increase of rates would of necessity be in the inclosed parishes. Holhead and Moore (*Inclosure Thrown Open*, p. 5.; *The Crying Sin of England*, p. 11) alike show that the increase was more often in the neighbouring towns, where the people swarmed when deprived of their holdings and employments.<sup>3</sup> The same estimate of cause and effect is confirmed by the official report of the justices of Nottingham (S.P. Dom., ch. i, CLXXXV, 86) and also by the rule of the Book of Orders (January 163<sup>0</sup>, Eden, i, p. 158), providing that extra rates should be imposed where depopulations had taken place."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thorold Rogers.

<sup>2</sup> Id., *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*, p. 434.

<sup>3</sup> See par. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Leonard, *Trans. R. Hist. Soc.*, N.S., vol. xix.

**16. *Contemporary evidence of depopulation. Results of enclosing the waste.***

Thus not only are enclosures deplored on account of their depopulating tendencies, but for the increased burdens placed on the occupier by aiding the pauper out of the rates. Many contemporary writers supply evidence of depopulation, and the continued decay and frequent wilful destruction of farm-houses. Moore says he does not complain of enclosures in counties where there are alternative occupations, as in Kent, but as regards other parts of the country, "surely they may make men as soon believe there is no sun in the firmament as that usually depopulation and decay of tillage will not follow inclosure in our inland countryes."<sup>1</sup>

Gonner, referring to the enclosures of this century, says : "It is obvious that two of the most serious charges urged against inclosure on public grounds would not be tenable as against that of common or waste. Inclosing these could not lead to a depopulation by reducing employment, nor could it occasion a decrease in the grain supply."<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to understand how, in the face of the evidence of contemporaries, it can be said that enclosure of waste and common could not cause depopulation. When these lands were taken in for sheep-farming or grazing, the evidence is clear to the effect that many more peasants were displaced by reason of deprivation of common rights than were given employment arising out of the new use to which the lands were put. It must also be remembered that land once enclosed became for all practical purposes absolute private property, so that the encloser might withhold it from use or keep it for sport as he chose. It will be seen, too, in subsequent chapters,<sup>3</sup> that even when enclosed waste was used to produce corn, it was frequently put back to grass when prices fell. Had, however, this land been colonized by the peasants, as it would have been but for enclosure, a large part of it of necessity would have remained arable. So that even if immediate unemployment were not caused, the power of withholding that land from use in the future lay in the hands of the encloser.

<sup>1</sup> John Moore, *A Scripture Word, etc.*, 1656.

<sup>2</sup> Gonner, p. 295.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter XI, par. 9 ; also Chapters XII and XIII.



17. *Lupton's satire. Land hunger prevalent. The repeal of the tillage laws.*

Lupton,<sup>1</sup> a satirist, writing in 1634 on enclosures and the condition of the country-side, said: "The poor of the parish and other places are his chief pioneers, who like mould-warps cast up earth. The parish he either wins by composition, or banters down by force of his lawless engines. Most of the inhabitants are miserably pillaged and undone. He loves to see the bounds of his boundless desires; he is like the devil; for they both compass the earth about. Enclosures make fat beasts, and lean poor people. . . . Husbandmen he loves not; for he maintains a few shepherds, with their curs. He holds those that plough the land, cruel oppressors; for they wound it, he thinks, too much, and therefore he intends to lay it down to rest."

Moore also gives us an idea of the prevalent land-hunger. He writes: "Truly it would make a charitable heart bleed to come now into our markets where we are now so busie upon such inclosures in Leicestershire where the markett is full of inquirie and complaint of such tennants to all they meet: 'Can you help me to a farm or a little land to imploy my team?' " <sup>2</sup>

The tillage laws of Elizabeth were repealed in 1624,<sup>3</sup> and an increase of enclosures followed, but it was then decided by the Court of Star Chamber that "depopulation" was a common law offence, and for such offence there were several prosecutions,<sup>4</sup> Coke himself being active against enclosers.

18. *Law of Settlement results in decay of cottages. A tendency to large-scale farming.*

We have seen how the Law of Settlement encouraged the destruction of cottages and the employment of labour from a distance. Evidence of this movement, and of the tendency to ingross and farm on a large scale, is given by Lord North,<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *London and the Country Carbonadoed!* (Harleian Misc., ix, 326).

<sup>2</sup> *The Crying Sin of England*, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> See P.C. Register IV., January 26, 16<sup>19</sup>/<sub>20</sub>. Low price of corn affects landlords.

<sup>4</sup> S. P. Dom., Charles I, No. 95, v, 187.

<sup>5</sup> Roger North, *A Discourse of the Poor* published 1753.

who wrote towards the end of the century. He said: "It is another very great destruction of people as well as an impediment to the recruit of them that gentlemen of late years have taken up an humour of destroying their tenements and cottages whereby they make it impossible that mankind should inhabit upon their estates. This is done sometimes barefaced because they harbour poor that are a charge to the parish, and sometimes because the charge of repairing is great, and if an house be ruinous they will not be at the cost of rebuilding and repairing it, and cast their lands into very great farms which are managed with less housing: and oftentimes for improvement as it is called which is done by buying in all freeholds, copyholds, and tenements that have common, and which harboured very many husbandry and labouring families, and then enclosing the commons and fields turning the managery from tillage to grazing." And once consolidation has been accomplished, "the English land laws with the custom of primogeniture and the difficulty of transferring land tend to make consolidation perpetual."<sup>1</sup>

19. *Dispossessed drift to the towns. Measures taken by the towns.*

The goal of many of the dispossessed in the seventeenth as in the sixteenth and fifteenth centuries was, of course, the towns. "Inclosure proceedings as conducted in England conduced to the destruction of this rural society. The labourers gradually ceased to own or occupy land; the farms increased in size; the possession of land became more exclusively the privilege of the rich; and an ever-increasing proportion of the people left the country for the towns."<sup>2</sup>

In Nottingham and other towns the inrush from the country-side was becoming a menace. Among the many references in the Nottingham Borough Records to this matter there is the following order: "Itt ys lykewise ordered and agreed, thatt from henceforthe noe Burgesse or freeman of this towne shall receave, admitt, or take in any tenant, or person, or persons to be his tenant to anye cottage or poore habytacion here nowe in beinge cominge oute of the countrie

<sup>1</sup> Leonard, *Trans. R. Hist. Soc.*, N.S., vol. xix.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

and nott beinge a towne dweller here, without the lycence and consent of the said Maior, Recorder, and Aldermen." <sup>1</sup> This order was made because the burgesses had complained of the great house shortage caused through the drift of peasants from the country-side. Countrymen taken in as tenants within the last three years were to be removed, or else the burgesses were to stand surety for them, that they should not become chargeable to the parish. Also, to try and prevent the inrush, both London <sup>2</sup> and Nottingham prohibited the erection of cottages or the conversion of barns into dwelling-houses or houses into separate tenements.<sup>3</sup>

## 20. *Insecurity of tenure prevents improvements.*

That tenure was at all times insecure throughout this century will be gathered from the continuance of enclosures. Gabriel Plattes,<sup>4</sup> a writer on husbandry, voices this grievance and draws attention to its evil results: "I see no reason why tenants at will, for life or a term of years, should be industrious whereas the benefit of their labours is to fall into other men's purses, unless there be a contract between landlord and tenant, whereby a just share may redound to both parties answerable to their merit, which, if this were done, then would the husbandmen be much stirred up to try experiments." <sup>5</sup> And given security of tenure, "men would labour cheerfully, as for their posterity, if they were sure that another should not reap where they have sown." <sup>6</sup>

Walter Blith,<sup>7</sup> dealing with the same matter in 1649, wrote: "If a tenant be at ever so great pains or cost for the improvement of his land, he doth thereby but occasion a great rack upon himself, or else invests his landlord with his cost and labour gratis, or at best lies at his landlord's mercy for requital, which occasions a neglect of good husbandry, to his own, the land, the landlord, and the Kingdom's suffering."

<sup>1</sup> Nottingham Borough Records, 1612.

<sup>2</sup> See Cunningham, *The Growth of English Industry, etc.*, p. 171, vol. ii.

<sup>3</sup> Act of 1593: No new buildings within three miles of the city unless for "inhabitants of better sort."

<sup>4</sup> *Treatise on English Husbandry*, 1638.

<sup>5</sup> Chapter IV.

<sup>6</sup> Chapter VII.

<sup>7</sup> *On Husbandry*, preface.

## 21. *Industry and commerce prosperous—rents and prices rise, wages fall.*

Referring to rents<sup>1</sup> during this period, Thorold Rogers says that it "is exceedingly probable, if not certain," that "in the course of the seventeenth century they were increased six or eight fold."<sup>2</sup> But while rents and prices were rising, wages were falling, so that although the country was developing and industry and commerce were expanding, the dispossessed had no share in this. "The English people who lived by wages were sinking lower and lower, and fast taking their place in the contrast with the opulence which trade and commerce began, and manufacturing activity multiplied, as the beggarly hewers and drawers of prosperous and progressive England. In 1651 the magistrates of Essex in quarter sessions at Chelmsford fixed the wages of artisans and labourers at 1s. 6d. and 1s. a day respectively; and this was the price which they generally secured. The price of wheat in this year was nearly 50s. a quarter."<sup>3</sup> Wheaten bread was still probably the most customary food of the peasant, although in 1626 it is stated in the grant of a monopoly<sup>4</sup> from King Charles that barley bread was the usual food of the people. Houghton,<sup>5</sup> however, writing during the last decade of the century, said that wheaten bread had always been the customary food, and that barley bread was only used when wheat was scarce.

## 22. *Gregory King's statistics.*

In 1696 were published some very interesting and important statistics, the result of calculations and estimates by Gregory King. These calculations seem to have been made with great care and in a scientific manner, and are generally considered to be reliable. These estimates, which will be

<sup>1</sup> John Taylor—the Water Poet—in 1630 wrote:

The painful Plowmans paines doe never cease,  
For he must pay his rent, or lose his lease,  
And though his Father and himselfe before,  
Have oft reliev'd poore beggars at theire doore;  
Yet now his Fine and Rent so high is rear'd,  
That his own meat, and cloathes are scarcely clear'd.

(*Superbiæ Flagellum.*)

<sup>2</sup> *Six Centuries, etc.*, p. 449.

<sup>4</sup> Eden, i, p. 561.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 432.

<sup>5</sup> See Thorold Rogers, p. 462.

found very useful later for purposes of comparison, are as follows :

Population of England	..	..	..	..	5,318,000
<i>Freeholders</i>	..	..	..	..	160,000
Income of freeholders averages £55 to £90.					
<i>Farmers</i>	..	..	..	..	150,000
Income of farmers averages £42 10s.					
<i>Shopkeepers and tradesmen</i>	..	..	..	..	50,000
<i>Artisans and craftsmen</i>	..	..	..	..	60,000

The above, with nobles and professional men, number nearly *one-half* of the population.

*Agricultural labourers and country people* engaged in small industries inhabit 849,000 houses, which at four persons to a house gives us 3,396,000 for this group.

Arable land	..	..	..	..	11,000,000 acres
Pasture and meadow	..	..	..	..	10,000,000 „
Sheep and lambs	..	..	..	..	11,000,000
Swine and pigs	..	..	..	..	2,000,000
Horses	..	..	..	..	1,200,000

## CHAPTER XI

# ENCLOSURES AND THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Enclosures eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—Industrial Revolution; large-scale farming; poverty and unemployment—Enclosure affects all lands; largely by private Act—Method; Petition, Commissioners, Award—Three periods of Parliamentary enclosure—Advocates testify as to oppression; commoners usually unable to prove legal rights—Official investigation into working of Enclosure Acts—Much waste land enclosed; an Oxfordshire enclosure—Cobbett and enclosure of wastes—Cost of enclosures; example from Brecknock—Enclosure leads to large farms and depopulation; consolidation and conversion result in higher rents and smaller gross produce—Increased rents the incentive; wheat acreage decreases—Fallacy that enclosure and dispossession necessary to improvement—Population increases rapidly; the allowance system—Increase in poor rates—Landlords and farmers prosperous; labourers starving—Cobbett and a rural parish in 1826—Domestic system killed by enclosures; factory system flourishes on its ruins—Domestic system dependent on access to land; advantage of machinery lost—Access to land being denied, landlords and capitalists share benefits of labour's increased productive powers—Rising of 1830; repression—Result of last enclosure movement; land monopoly.

### 1. *Extent of enclosures in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.* *Reasons for fresh outburst.*

ALTHOUGH, as we have seen, enclosures did not cease after the great movement of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, yet after the first outburst it was more in the nature of a steady progress. Now in the eighteenth century the movement again intensifies, and continues with varying force up to the middle of the nineteenth century, accounting for the enclosure of over one-third of the area of the cultivated land of this country,<sup>1</sup> or, roughly speaking, for all land not previously enclosed and appropriated. It is computed that some 3,000,000 acres were enclosed in the eighteenth century and 6,000,000 acres in the first half of the nineteenth century, but even this enormous

<sup>1</sup> See First Report of Royal Comm. on Agric. (1867), issued 1896.

total is probably exceeded when account is taken of all non-parliamentary enclosure.<sup>1</sup>

The enclosures of these centuries had several contributory causes. Improvements in agriculture, introduced by such men as Tull and "Turnip" Townsend, which took the line of growing new root crops and artificial grasses; the introduction of the system of rotation of crops; improvements in the breeding of stock, such as the improvements in sheep-breeding by Bakewell, led to much enclosure of both arable and pasture, to conversion of arable,<sup>2</sup> and to the establishment of large-scale farms. The increase in prices due to the Napoleonic wars gave a great impetus to enclosures, especially of waste lands for corn-growing. There was also a great demand for land, especially in the latter half of the eighteenth century, by rich merchants and traders who had made fortunes during the commercial prosperity of the earlier part of the century. This class of people, and also many smaller folk, evinced quite a "craze"<sup>3</sup> for farming, and all this contributed to increase the demand for land. Lastly, there is the rapacity of the landowners to take into account, for enclosure and the demand for land increased their rents, as did also the conversion of arable to pasture—a movement to which the term "improvement"<sup>4</sup> was applied.

## 2. *Great events of the period. Industrial Revolution. Large-scale farming. Widespread poverty and unemployment.*

In considering the enclosure movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and its results, it is important to bear in mind other great changes which were taking place in the country at this time. Commerce and industry flourished in the eighteenth century, especially in the first half, and foreign trade continued to grow rapidly.<sup>5</sup> Then came the series of great discoveries and inventions which were to give this country the lead in the world's manufactures. These inventions, and

<sup>1</sup> See Slater and Gonner.

<sup>2</sup> Gonner: "After 1750 the Midland inclosures increased rapidly. Without doubt the increased demand for animal products and the improvements in breeding and feeding combine to associate inclosure from 1750 to 1780 with frequent conversions to pasture. This tendency decreases after 1780."

<sup>3</sup> Thorold Rogers.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the term "improvement."

<sup>5</sup> Cunningham, *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce*.

the use of steam power, brought about what has been called the Industrial Revolution, which extended from about 1770 well on into the nineteenth century. This great change in industry, coupled, as we shall see, with the enclosure movement, led to the supersession of the "domestic system" of manufacture by the "factory system," and a consequent shifting of the centre of gravity of the population from the south and east of England to the north and west.

In agriculture the movement was towards large-scale farms and the elimination of the yeoman farmer and cottier. The latter mostly became landless paupers, while the average produce per acre was six or seven times what it was in the fourteenth century.

This period also saw the greatest war there had hitherto been, lasting from 1792 to 1815, and the greatest degradation, misery, and unemployment.

### 3. *Enclosure affects all lands. Largely carried through by private Act of Parliament.*

Enclosures during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries affected all lands—the open arable field, the common pasture, and the waste. According to Dr. Slater,<sup>1</sup> from 1727 onward about one-third of the Enclosure Acts are for commonable waste and two-thirds for enclosing all the open and common arable and other lands of a parish.

The enclosures of this period were carried out to a large extent by private Acts of Parliament, and later by public General Enclosure Acts; but at the same time probably an almost equal area was enclosed without any parliamentary intervention. An Act of Parliament for this purpose was not a new idea, for in the reign of Charles II there had been an Act for the enclosing of Bedford Level.<sup>2</sup> When these Acts became regular in the eighteenth century, they at first took the place of the Chancery Decree, which had been used to confirm an agreement, but later they were used to effect enclosure, with little suggestion of previous agreement. Whatever the method of enclosure, however, we shall find that it was attended with great hardship and distress.

<sup>1</sup> *The English Peasantry and the Enclosure of Common Fields.*

<sup>2</sup> 15 Charles II, cap. 17, revoked by 1 James II, cap. 21.



#### 4. *The early Acts usually confirmed an agreement.*

Some idea of enclosure by agreement, and the object of the movement can be obtained from *The Duty of a Steward to his Lord*,<sup>1</sup> written in 1727: "If the Free holders cannot *all* be persuaded to sell, yet at least an Agreement for Inclosing should be pushed forward, by the Steward, and a scheme laid, wherein it may appear that an exact and proportional share will be allotted to every proprietor, persuading them first, if possible, to sign a Form of Agreement, and then to chuse Commissioners on both sides. . . . If the Steward be a man of good sense, he will find a necessity of making use of it all, in rooting out *superstition* from amongst them, as what is so great a hindrance to all *noble* Improvements."<sup>2</sup> And in the same work we find the following advice: "The Steward should endeavour to lay all the small Farms, let to poor indigent People, to the great ones. . . . It is unwise to unite farms all at once, *because of the odium and increase of Poor-rates.*"<sup>3</sup>

#### 5. *Method under the Private Act—Petition, Commissioners, and Award.*

After the middle of the century the private Act became the rule. The movement to enclose was usually started by petition, which necessitated some expenditure; and it was just this procedure which gave the large landowner the dominant voice in the whole arrangement.<sup>4</sup> A Commissioner or Commissioners were appointed, and the onus was put on the commoners to prove their rights of common. Of course, in a large number of cases they were unable to prove a legal right, and so were not entitled to compensation.<sup>5</sup> Part of the land was let or sold to defray the expenses of the enclosure, which were usually large, and after new roads were laid out, the Commissioners proceeded to redistribute and allot the holdings. The lord would receive the lion's share of the waste and common pasture, and those who had succeeded in proving rights of common

<sup>1</sup> E. Laurence, Art. XIV, p. 35 (quoted by Dr. Slater).

<sup>2</sup> I.e. increases of rent.

<sup>3</sup> The italics are ours.

<sup>4</sup> Gonner: "Still it is no doubt true that in the first two-thirds, and to a considerable extent throughout the whole eighteenth century, the real power in determining on inclosure and in devising the particular form and detail of the petition lay with the few and not with the many" (p. 74).

<sup>5</sup> See par. 7.

would be given a small allotment, in many cases so small as to be useless.<sup>1</sup> Also if the occupier of the cottage were only a tenant, the allotment in lieu of common rights went to the *owner* of the cottage, the tenant getting nothing. All allotments had to be fenced by the allottees, and the expense of doing this, and the smallness of the allotment, frequently led the holder to sell to the large farmer, who was only too willing to buy. In this way rights which the commoner should have handed down to posterity were lost for ever.<sup>2</sup>

By the General Act of 1801 the Commissioners were empowered to purchase the rights of small proprietors, and could give payment in cash up to £20. Between £20 and £200 the money was to be invested for them. This provision was, of course, useful in helping to obtain the necessary two-thirds majority for the enclosure, and there is little doubt that these small sums were soon frittered away.<sup>3</sup>

#### 6. *The three periods of parliamentary enclosure.*

Gonner divides parliamentary enclosure into three periods : "The first, which extends through the eighteenth century to the general Act of 1801,<sup>4</sup> by reason of the very uniformity and complexity of the provisions included on each occasion, a general Act was rendered not only feasible and useful, but essential. The second period is from 1801 to 1842-5, and includes the private Acts which were passed in accordance with the provisions of the general Act. After 1845 the powers hitherto exercised directly by Parliament, and through Commissioners specially appointed by Act, were delegated to different permanent bodies established by Act, and subject to parliamentary control, inasmuch as their decisions or orders

<sup>1</sup> See Gonner and Slater.

<sup>2</sup> Sir R. Peel, P.M., speaking in the House in 1844 : "As to the actual rights, the House must be cautious how they deal lightly with those rights. . . . The rights of common connected them (the peasantry) with the soil. The right of turning a goose on a common made a man feel interested in the tenure of land. It might be more beneficial to him to accept two or three pounds, but recollect that you are not dealing with the rights of the individuals, but with those of his successors" (*Hansard*, vol. lxxiii, p. 976).

<sup>3</sup> See Slater, p. 264.

<sup>4</sup> There had been an abortive Bill in the Lords in 1666 "for confirming of inclosures made by decrees in Courts of Equity," and a similarly abortive Bill in the Commons in 1664 "to inclose and improve commons and waste lands."

had to remain on the table of the Houses before becoming operative.”<sup>1</sup>

7. *Advocates of enclosure testify to the oppression of the peasant. Commoners usually unable to prove a legal right.*

The advocates of enclosure themselves, at this time, were almost unanimous in saying that most of the enclosures were badly managed and very oppressive to the peasant. Stone, referred to by Gonner as “one of the most trustworthy writers on the subject in the latter part of the eighteenth century,” said: “That inclosures have most generally been mismanaged may evidently be seen by their present condition.”<sup>2</sup>

John Cowper,<sup>3</sup> writing in 1732, said: “When these commons come to be inclosed and converted into pasture, the Ruin of the Poor is a natural consequence, they being bought out by the lord of the Manor, or some other person of substance.”

The Board of Agriculture General Report on Enclosures, published 1808, also shows that the peasants suffered great losses as a result of enclosure. Loss of fuel is stated to have been a great injury, and the benefit of enclosure to the poor “by no means unmixed.” The Report adds: “In some cases many cows had been kept without a legal right, and nothing had been given for the practice. In other cases where allotments were assigned, the cottagers could not pay the expense of the measure, and were forced to sell their allotments.”<sup>4</sup> In others they kept cows by right of hiring their cottages or common rights, and the land going, of course, to their proprietor, was added to the farms, and the poor sold their cows. *This is a very common case.*”<sup>5</sup>

8. *Investigation into working of Enclosure Acts—in most cases the poor lose heavily.*

An investigation<sup>6</sup> was held into the working of sixty-eight Enclosure Acts, for the most part in the eastern counties, and it was stated that in fifty-three cases out of the sixty-eight

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 59–60.

<sup>2</sup> *Suggestions, etc.*, p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> “Inclosing Commons and Common Field lands is contrary to the interest of the Nation.”

<sup>4</sup> According to Board of Agriculture calculation, average number of acres in each Act was 1,162, and average expense of each Act was £1,650.

<sup>5</sup> Pp. 12–13.

<sup>6</sup> Board of Agriculture General Report on Enclosures, published 1808.

the poor were injured. Commenting on this inquiry, Dr. Slater says: "The general tenor of the statement in these cases is to the effect that the condition of the poor has become very much worse, that they have lost all their cows, and they no longer are able to buy milk for their children."

In the same Report a Mr. Forster, an Enclosure Commissioner for Norfolk, "lamented that he had been accessory to injuring 2,000 poor people at the rate of twenty families per parish. Numbers in the practice of feeding the commons cannot prove their right; and many, indeed most who have allotments, have not more than 1 acre, which being insufficient for the man's cow, both the cow and land are usually sold to opulent farmers. The right sold before the allotment produced much less than the allotment after it, but the money is dissipated, doing them no good when they cannot vest it in stock."<sup>1</sup>

Another Commissioner, Mr. Ewen, "observed that in most of the enclosures he has known the poor man's allotment and cow are sold five times in six before the award is signed." Arthur Young himself, the great advocate of enclosures, wrote: "By nineteen Enclosure Acts out of twenty, the poor are injured, in some grossly injured. . . . The poor in these parishes may say, and with truth, Parliament may be tender of property, all I know is, I had a cow, and an Act of Parliament has taken it from me."<sup>2</sup>

Lord Lincoln (afterwards Duke of Newcastle), in introducing the Bill of 1845, compared it favourably with the private Act system. He said: "This I know, that in nineteen cases out of twenty Committees of this House on private Bills neglected the rights of the poor . . . Committees being permitted to remain in ignorance of the claims of the poor man because, by reason of his poverty, he is unable to come up to London, to fee counsel, to produce witnesses, and to urge his claims before the Committee." From such opinions expressed by advocates of enclosures it would be safe to conclude that the Enclosure Acts worked a great wrong on the small tenant and commoner and were responsible for untold misery. This becomes even

<sup>1</sup> P. 157.

<sup>2</sup> *Enquiry into the Propriety of Applying Wastes to the Better Support and Maintenance of the Poor*, p. 42.

more apparent when the dispossessed are followed from the country-side.

9. *Much waste land enclosed. An enclosure in Oxfordshire.*

Many of those who opposed enclosure of common fields did not object to enclosure of wastes, on the grounds, presumably, that it would give more employment than it displaced. This point has already been dealt with in a previous chapter,<sup>1</sup> and, referring to such enclosures, Dr. Slater says: "Perhaps the greatest evil of Acts for the enclosure of waste in the past was that they prevented such gradual reclamation and enclosure by peasant cultivators."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Slater gives an example of the enclosure of the parish of Ewelme (Oxfordshire): "This gives a typical instance of the effect of enclosure of *commonable waste*<sup>3</sup> on the poor. One of the commons enclosed was known as the 'Furze Common,' and it supplied the poor of the neighbourhood with their fuel, for *every* inhabitant had the right of cutting furze on it. After enclosure the Furze Common was allotted to *one* man, who allowed no trespass on it, and the *owners* of cottages were awarded allotments of land in consideration of rights which the *cottagers* had exercised. The lands so allotted became part of ordinary farms, and the poor simply lost their supply of fuel without any compensation whatever. This was done under the sanction, not of an Enclosure Act rushed through Parliament before 1845, but of the Enclosure Commissioners appointed expressly to prevent any injury to the class least able to guard its own interests, as well as to facilitate enclosure."<sup>4</sup>

Between 1702 and 1845 there were 1,385 Acts for enclosing common pasture and waste only, and Dr. Slater puts the total acreage at 1,765,711 acres (stated and estimated).

10. *Cobbett on the enclosure of wastes. The fallacy of calling them unproductive.*

There is an illuminating passage in the *Political Register*<sup>5</sup> showing what Cobbett, an experienced farmer and a man

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter X, par. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *The English Peasantry, etc.*, p. 262.

<sup>3</sup> The italics in this paragraph are ours. <sup>4</sup> *The English Peasantry, etc.*, p. 51.

<sup>5</sup> *Selections from Cobbett's Political Register*, 1813, vol. iv.

who knew the country-side, thought of the enclosure of the wastes. He had refused to support a general Enclosure Bill introduced in 1813, and wrote : "Those who are so eager for new inclosure seem to argue as if the waste land in its present state produced nothing at all. But is this the fact ? Can anyone point out a single inch of it which does not produce something and the produce of which is made use of ? It goes to the feeding of sheep, of cows, of cattle of all descriptions, and, what is of great consequence in my view of the matter, it helps to rear, in health and vigour, numerous families of the children of labourers, which children, were it not for these wastes, must be crammed into the stinking suburbs of towns amidst filth of all sorts, and congregating together in the practice of every species of idleness and vice. A family reared by the side of a common or forest is clearly distinguishable from a family bred on the pestiferous stench of the dark alley of a town."

11. *Great cost of enclosures. An example from Brecknockshire.*  
*The "tai nos."*

Mr. John Lloyd, a J.P. for the county of Brecon and a landowner, in giving evidence before the Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire,<sup>1</sup> cites an example of enclosure of waste on a Crown manor between 1815 and 1819, and also draws attention to the fact that, although there were in this county many enclosures by private Acts, yet the Parliamentary Return of Enclosure Acts between 1760 and 1820 gave "nil" for Brecknockshire.

The 40,000 acres of waste referred to were grazed over by some 500 or more farms, and were used for sheep all the year and also for young cattle in the summer. "Down came the valuers, surveyors, and commissioners . . . and inspected and surveyed, and so on, and apart from the immense expense they put the people to, to prove all their titles and claims to common rights, and the lawsuits which they had to maintain in order to keep certain rights that they had . . . the cost of the Commission alone for dealing with this 40,000 acres of land was £16,000 of money in those days. To provide that money they sold 8,000 acres of the land, the best parts and the

<sup>1</sup> 1896, Cd. 8221.

slopes of this great tract of land. That produced about £15,000 or £16,000 to pay for the work. . . . The Crown took 13,860 acres of the middle portion, and the best portion, and the commoners had some little more than that, viz. 17,000 acres of land, but a good deal of the worst of it, some of it being hardly worth anything at all. . . . The effect is now visible upon the agriculture of that district."

There is also a reference in this Report to the interesting survival of "tai nos" or "hafod un nos"—"houses of a night"—a custom by which a holding of 5 or 6 acres was claimed from the waste if a hut with smoking chimney could be erected in one night. Only a small garden surrounding the hut was enclosed, and the custom seems to have been that this became freehold after sixty years. Dr. Slater<sup>1</sup> refers to these holdings, and quotes Mr. John Swain, a Commissioner, who said that the cottager not only grew sufficient produce for himself and his family, but obtained a money return of £35 15s. in addition. Enclosure Acts prevented the creation of any more of these holdings, and, although those over twenty-one years old were not interfered with, more than half the holdings fell into the hands of the lord of the manor.

**12.** *Enclosure of common fields, etc., leads to large-scale farming and depopulation. Consolidation and conversion give higher rents, but smaller gross produce.*

Enclosure of the common fields was usually followed by consolidation of the small holdings into large farms, and in many cases the arable was converted into pasture for grazing. Dr. Cunningham<sup>2</sup> says: "Despite the reiterated allegation, it is impossible to believe that enclosing in the eighteenth century implied either more pasture farming or less employment for labour." There is, however, direct evidence that considerable areas were put down to pasture; and when we see the increased rent which pasture-land commanded, there was obviously every incentive for the laying of arable to grass.

Apart from the conversion of arable land, there was a considerable amount of new land ploughed up, especially

<sup>1</sup> *The English Peasantry, etc.*, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> *The Growth of English Industry, etc.*, vol. ii, p. 384.

during the period of the Napoleonic wars ; but, as has been seen, such enclosure resulted in large-scale farms, with probably a net loss of employment. And taking the two movements together, there is no doubt that there was a net loss of employment in agriculture, to say nothing of other rural industries which were affected.

Dr. Slater, quoting from a tract <sup>1</sup> published in 1786, gives an account of an enclosure, probably in the Midlands : “ Before enclosure it contained 82 houses, of which 20 were small farms and 42 were cottages with common rights. It had 1,800 acres of common field arable, 200 acres of rich common cow pasture, and 200 acres of meadow, commonable after hay harvest. The common pasture fed 200 milch cows and 60 dry ones till hay harvest, at which time they were turned into the meadows, and their place taken by about 100 horses ; 1,200 sheep were fed on the stubbles.” *Before* enclosure the gross produce amounted to £4,101 5s. “ As a result of enclosure the 20 farms were consolidated into 4, the whole area devoted to grazing, 60 cottages were pulled down or otherwise disappeared, and the necessary work was done by 4 herds (one for each farm), at £25 a year each, board included, and 8 maidservants at £18 a year each, board included.” *After* enclosure the gross produce was £2,660. “ But while gross produce was thus reduced by about one-third, the *gross rent* was raised from £1,137 17s. to £1,801 12s. 2d.

**13.** *Increased rents the incentive to enclose and convert. Enclosure results in decrease in wheat acreage.*

On this question of consolidation and conversion, John Wedge, the Board of Agriculture reporter for Warwickshire, in 1793 wrote : <sup>2</sup> “ About forty years ago the southern and eastern parts of this county consisted mostly of open fields. There are still about 50,000 acres of open-field land, which in a few years will probably all be enclosed. . . . These lands being now grazed want much fewer hands to manage them than they did in the former open state. Upon all enclosures of open fields the farms have generally been made much larger. For these causes the hardy yeomanry of county vil-

<sup>1</sup> *Thoughts on Inclosures, by a County Farmer.*

<sup>2</sup> *Warwickshire*, p. 40.



lages have been driven for employment into Birmingham, Coventry, and other manufacturing towns."

Arthur Young speaks of a great enclosure of waste from 1744 to 1774 in the east and north, resulting in an increase of tillage, and of enclosure of arable fields and conversion to pasture in Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Warwickshire, Huntingdonshire and Buckinghamshire.<sup>1</sup> This resulted in consolidation into large farms and the turning of the peasants into town labourers. Referring to Bedfordshire in 1768,<sup>2</sup> he says: "The open fields let at 7/- and 7/6 per acre, and the *inclosed pastures* about 17/-. Hence we find a profit of 10/- an acre by inclosing and laying to grass"; and he expressed surprise that many landlords did not in this county lay down their land to pasture.<sup>3</sup>

In the Board of Agriculture General Report,<sup>4</sup> previously mentioned, there are the results of an investigation into the increase and decrease of wheat acreage after the enclosure of all commonable lands under Acts between 1761 and 1799, excluding those Acts under which waste only was enclosed. Taking all counties, in 239 cases the wheat acreage was increased by 14,507 acres, and in 407 cases it was decreased by 30,894 acres. By far the greatest decrease was in the Midland counties, where in 262 cases the decrease was 22,036 acres, against an increase in 59 cases of 3,033 acres.<sup>5</sup>

#### 14. *Fallacy that enclosure and dispossession were necessary preliminaries to improvement.*

It was, of course, widely held that no agricultural improvements were possible while the open-field system of husbandry prevailed, and many opponents of enclosures seem to have agreed with this. Dr. Slater, however, refers to one or two survivals of the old system which have adopted improvements

<sup>1</sup> *Political Arithmetic*, published 1774.

<sup>2</sup> *Tour through the North of England*, 1768.

<sup>3</sup> John Mortimer, *The Whole Art of Husbandry*: "I shall only propose two things that are matters of fact, that I think, are sufficient to prove the advantages of inclosures; which is first, the great quantities of ground daily inclosed, and, secondly, the increase of rent that is everywhere made by those that do inclose their lands" (p. 1).

<sup>4</sup> Pp. 39 and 232 (quoted by Slater).

<sup>5</sup> Slater points out that "in estimating the significance of these figures it must be borne in mind that the figures for acreage in wheat after enclosure were collected at a time of famine prices for wheat."

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and are flourishing, and it certainly is not clear why an interchange and consolidation of strips, without enclosure and dispossession, would not have made it just as easy to effect improvements. One of these survivals is a parish in the Isle of Axholme: "To catch the spirit of the common-field system, to see that system no mere historical survival, but developing in harmony with modern needs, one must go to the Isle of Axholme."<sup>1</sup>

"Axholme may be described as a district of allotments, cultivated, and in great part owned, by a working peasantry.

"The Isle of Axholme has been singularly successful in preserving the spirit of the common-field system, social equality, mutual helpfulness, and an industrial aim directed rather towards the maximum gross produce of food than towards the maximum net profit; while at the same time it has discarded those features of the system which would have been obstacles to agricultural progress. The 'barbarous omission' <sup>2</sup> to enclose the open arable fields has been abundantly justified."

Another such example is the parish of Weston Zoyland, Somersetshire, which in 1830 was divided and allotted, but not enclosed. In this parish are 500 acres of fertile open fields, and all under tillage.

### 15. *Urban population and total population increase rapidly. Allowance system causes recklessness and large families.*

When we speak of depopulation caused by enclosures, it must, of course, be understood that this refers to *rural* depopulation and not to a general depopulation of the whole country. On the contrary, during the period under review, the population of the country as a whole increased rapidly.<sup>3</sup> About 7,000,000 in the middle of the eighteenth century, it had risen to 8,892,536 in 1801, to 12,000,236 in 1821, and by 1861 had reached 20,066,224. This was an increase almost solely in urban districts, and we have already seen how, in addition to the natural increase in

<sup>1</sup> P. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Young.

<sup>3</sup> William Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, vol. ii.: "Is it not something rather damnable . . . to talk of *transporting* Englishmen, on account of the *excess of their numbers*, when the fact is notorious that their labour produces five or ten times as much food and raiment as they and their families consume."—P. 55 (1826).

the population, the towns were fed from the country-side. This was the period of the growth of the "wens," as Cobbett called London and the great manufacturing towns—not a healthy growth, but a growth in slums and in crowded tenements, a growth of paupers and so-called wage-slaves who were little better than paupers. Wages fell until they were far below the subsistence level, and the occupiers were rated in order that wages might be supplemented. "Early marriage was particularly encouraged by the change from the open-field condition to enclosure. After enclosure, the enriched farming class preferred to pay board wages, and the young labourer, with nothing to gain by waiting, with the assurance of Poor Law assistance if needed, naturally preferred to marry early." <sup>1</sup>

16. *Enormous increase in poor rates. Allowance system and wholesale pauperism.*

Poor rates began to increase enormously towards the end of the eighteenth century. From £2,004,238 in 1785 they increased to £4,267,965 in 1802, and to £8,640,842 in 1813.<sup>2</sup> But the full increase in poor rates was not always apparent in the enclosed villages, for, "in judging the rise of poor rates, it must not be forgotten that where the rent rises at the same time as the nominal rate, the sum of money actually raised for Poor Law purposes is increased in a greater ratio than the nominal poor rate. If, for example, by enclosure, the rental of a parish is increased 50 %, but the poor rate doubled, the yield of the poor rate is increased threefold. And if a considerable number of labourers are driven elsewhere, the amount of destitution produced by the change is far greater even than that indicated by a threefold increase in the amount of relief given." <sup>3</sup>

It was the "allowance system" of supplementing wages out of the rates that was responsible to a large extent for the huge increase in poor rates ; and the result of this system was that none but those in receipt of poor relief could hope to obtain employment. Commenting on the position at this time, Thorold Rogers says : "For centuries the law and the

<sup>1</sup> Slater, p. 264.

<sup>2</sup> Thorold Rogers, p. 410.

<sup>3</sup> Slater, p. 102.

Government interposed on the side of the employer in order to lessen the labourer's share. For a very long period—two centuries—the efforts of law and Government were unsuccessful. At last they gained their object and gradually reduced the labourer's share to a bare subsistence—so bare, that in order to get their necessary work from him, they supplemented his wages by a tax on the general public.”<sup>1</sup> The allowance system was stopped and the poor law reformed in 1834, but we shall see that starvation and distress continued.

*17. Landlords and farmers prosperous—labourers starving.  
Rents, wages and prices.*

The poverty and unemployment of the last years of the eighteenth century continued into the nineteenth, and even increased at the close of the Great War (1815), when disbanded soldiers were returning home. Rents were high, however, and the landlords and large farmers were flourishing. Young put the average rent of land at 10s. per acre, and referring to this Thorold Rogers says: “The payment therefore made for the occupation of land has risen twenty times. The average rise in the price of wheat is about six and a half times, and the average rise in the price of labour is almost exactly three and a half times . . . and it should be remembered that while the labourer in Young's time had his earnings of hay and harvest time included in the aggregate average, the labourer of the earlier period (*Middle Ages*) had his harvest earnings over and above.”<sup>2</sup>

In 1795 the labourer procured about one-eighth of what he earned by the same labour in the *fifteenth century*,<sup>3</sup> and according to Eden's collection<sup>4</sup> from various counties of the actual wages received by agricultural labourers in 1795, they everywhere fell short by 1s. or more a week of their necessary expenditure on *food*, without taking any account of *rent, fuel, clothes*, or extras. It was in this year, too, that, owing to a poor harvest, wheat rose to 104s., and although many died of starvation, landlords and farmers were prosperous.<sup>5</sup> But when peace came and prices fell to some extent many farmers

<sup>1</sup> P. 491.

<sup>2</sup> Thorold Rogers.

<sup>3</sup> P. 479.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*, p. 487.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

who had purchased their farms during the period of enhanced prices lost heavily.<sup>1</sup>

### 18. Cobbett's account of a rural parish in 1826.

We get a very interesting and informing description from Cobbett of the Valley of the Avon and the Parish of Milton, which he visited in August 1826. After commenting on the fact that in a length of thirty miles there were thirty large parish churches, and that there was a very fine supply of wheat, oats, barley, sheep and lambs, he says: "A very fine sight this was, and it could not meet the eye without making one look round (and in vain) to see the people who were to eat all this food, and without making one reflect on the horrible, the unnatural, the base and infamous state in which we must be, when projects are on foot, and are openly avowed, for transporting those who raise this food, because they want to eat enough of it to keep them alive; and when no project is on foot for transporting the idlers who live in luxury upon this same food."<sup>2</sup>

And then, referring to Milton, he writes: "The parish of Milton does, as we have seen, produce food, drink, clothing, and all other things, enough for 502 families, or 2,510 persons upon my allowance, which is a great deal more than three times the present allowance, because the present allowance includes clothing, fuel, tools and everything. Now, then, according to the 'Population Return' laid before Parliament, this parish contains 500 persons, or according to my division, 100 families. So that here are about *one hundred* families to raise food and drink enough, and to raise wool and other things to pay for all other necessities, for *five hundred and two* families! Aye, and five hundred and two families fed and lodged, too, on my liberal scale. Fed and lodged according to the present scale, this one hundred families raise enough to supply more, and many more, than fifteen hundred families, or seven thousand five hundred persons! And yet those who do the work are half starved!" And taking the twenty-

<sup>1</sup> Writing of the period 1776-1815, Dr. Cunningham says: "The pressure of poverty was felt not merely among those who were unemployed, but also among those who were over-worked" (p. 443).

<sup>2</sup> William Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, vol. ii, p. 41.

nine rural parishes, he says : " Here are 9,116 persons raising food and raiment sufficient for 45,580 persons, fed and lodged according to my scale ; and sufficient for 136,740 persons according to the scale on which the unhappy labourers of this fine valley are now fed and lodged ! And yet there is an ' *emigration committee* ' sitting to devise the means of getting rid . . . of *these working* people, who are grudged even the miserable morsel that they get ! " <sup>1</sup>

19. "*Domestic System*" killed by enclosures. The "*Factory System*" flourishes on its ruins, and much labour is unemployed. Workers blame machinery.

As we have already seen, the eighteenth century witnessed the inauguration of the Factory System, which took the place of the old Domestic System of manufacture. This latter was a system under which manufacturing and agriculture went hand in hand, the former frequently being a part-time occupation and subsidiary to the farm-work. In this way, production was carried on in the farm-houses, cottages, and in small workshops scattered among the various country towns ; capital was diffused and held in small quantities, and markets were on the whole steady.

Into this system came the revolutionary enclosure movement, driving the yeomen and cottagers in large numbers to the towns, and at the same time, of course, putting an end to many industries which had been carried on by them in the country districts. While this process of dispossessing the peasant, putting an end to cottage manufacture, and increasing the competition for work in the towns, was in progress, there came the great inventions destined to revolutionize industry. Machines began to do the work of many men, and these machines were collected into large factories, where cheap labour was required to tend them. And the cheap labour was there ready, provided by a system which had for generations and centuries been gradually restricting the area of land available for the labourer. No Acts of Parliament or assessments of justices were necessary to limit the wages of the factory workers, for they were driven by hunger and the lack of alternative employment to offer themselves, and even their

<sup>1</sup> *Rural Rides*, vol. ii, p. 46.

small children, for a pittance which scarcely enabled them to live.<sup>1</sup>

Nor was there work for all, for the machines were "labour-saving," and in too many cases the labour saved became or remained unemployed, and labour which was still exerted on the hand machine began to find it difficult to compete with the power factory and had to close down, thereby anticipating, probably only by a brief period, a result which the enclosure of the village would bring more thoroughly. With such a state of affairs it is little to be wondered at that many hand-workers regarded the power machine as the cause of all their misery and unemployment.

20. *The domestic system dependent on access to land. Machinery increases productive power of all labour, but the advantage is lost when the competition is all on the side of labour for work.*

But the real cause of the misery and unemployment among the hand-workers would seem to have been the fact that they had lost their footing on the land,<sup>2</sup> that enclosure had deprived them of alternative and supplementary occupation. The domestic system, the cottage and farm industries, depended on the workers having access to land, and when this was denied, their power of resistance had gone, their fate was sealed. If there had been no enclosures, and if the opportunities for workers on the land had exceeded the supply of labour, power machinery would have caused no unemployment. There is nothing inherent in labour-saving machinery to cause unemployment. Its nature is to save labour, in the sense that a man can, with its assistance, produce the same wealth with less labour than before, or more wealth with the same labour, and the man who acquires these goods by exchange will get them with a smaller expenditure of labour than he previously did. In this way the worker will have saved labour in acquiring the machine-made goods, which labour he will be free to

<sup>1</sup> Most eighteenth-century writers agreed that poverty was due to *idleness and improvidence*. (See Cunningham, p. 381.)

<sup>2</sup> See Massie, *A Plan for the Establishment of Charity Houses*: "To small portions of land, right of commoning, and cottages, England is much indebted for the mighty achievements in war which are recorded in the annals of the English nation."

*exercise in other ways*, and the advantages of the machine will be diffused among all the workers by exchange. Thus labour becomes more productive, and wages should rise.

We have said that the worker would be able to exercise the "saved labour" in other ways; but suppose there are no other openings for this labour—suppose, in fact, that men are fiercely competing for jobs that are too few to go round, and that those who succeed in getting work must take the bare subsistence offered—what, we may ask, will be the effect on these men of the advent of a new labour-saving machine? Will it not be that some will be put out of employment altogether, and that the wages of the others will tend to be reduced by competition to the extent of the advantage which would, under other conditions, accrue to each individual?

**21.** *Access to land essential. Landlords and capitalists share benefits of labour's increased productive powers. Depression in industry followed by unemployment.*

Thus it seems plain that labour-saving machinery does not do away with the need for access to land, but does, in fact, enable labour to produce more from the land. And it seems safe to say that if labour had had a firm hold on the land at the time of the Industrial Revolution, the new system would have grown up very differently. There would have been no starving crowds ready to work in factories for a low wage, and the probability is that work on the new machines would have been frequently combined with agriculture.

The capitalist was blamed for the low wages and the bad conditions in the factories, but it was the power of the new land monopoly that was providing him with his cheap labour, and was sharing with him the benefits of the new machinery. And the new industry proved unstable, for it depended to a large extent on foreign orders. When these fell off, workers were turned adrift, and wholesale unemployment resulted, for now there was no plot of ground to work, no alternative occupation.

In 1840 and several succeeding years there was terrible distress in the manufacturing towns. In Nottingham,<sup>1</sup> in

<sup>1</sup> For particulars of Nottingham, Coventry, Spitalfields, Lancashire and Wigan, see Dunkley, *The Charter of the Nations*, 1854.



1841, nearly one-fifth of the people were on poor relief; in Coventry one-third of the population was unemployed; and in Spitalfields 24,000 persons were in receipt of poor relief. Lancashire was in a terrible condition, and it was calculated that the receipts of 2,000 families in Wigan were only sufficient, if all spent on bread, to buy each person 22 oz. of bread a day. At Hinckley <sup>1</sup> one-third of the inhabitants were paupers and more than one-fifth of the houses were empty, and in Leeds the Guardians offered the paupers 6s. per week for doing nothing rather than 7s. 6d. per week for breaking stones.

Under such conditions it is little wonder that the labourers became reckless, that drunkenness was prevalent and population increased rapidly.

## 22. *The rising of 1830—harsh repression.*

During the latter part of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries there was much rioting and rick-burning, for enclosures and the resulting misery were not taken lying down. But against combination there was the most severe repression, and ringleaders and others were often hanged or transported as felons to Australia.<sup>2</sup> The same fate usually befell those who, to satisfy their hunger or to supplement a low wage, helped themselves to preserved game.

In the winter of 1830 broke out what may be said to be the last active revolt of the agricultural workers. Conditions were bad and the labourers starving, men and women in many parts living on roots and sorrel. The rising was almost spontaneous in the eastern and south-eastern counties. Better wages were demanded, and only when these were refused did the men proceed to rick- and farm-burning. Revolt was, however, useless. A special commission of judges was sent to the affected parts, and there were hangings and transportations for life for many trifling offences.

## 23. *Result of the last enclosure movement—land monopoly.*

As a result, then, of the great enclosure movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—a revolution in tenure—

<sup>1</sup> For Hinckley and Leeds, see Martineau, iv, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> *Rural Rides*, vol. ii.: "This is, I verily believe it, the worst used labouring people upon the face of the earth. Dogs and hogs and horses are treated with more civility; and as to food and lodging, how gladly would the labourers change with them!" (p. 55).

we find depopulation<sup>1</sup> of the country-side and a vast increase in town populations, widespread poverty and unemployment. The "commons" of England had disappeared, their place being taken by the so-called "lower classes." By far the greater part of the land of this country was monopolized and enclosed; farms were concentrated into fewer hands, and vast tracts of what had hitherto been waste and often inaccessible land had been reduced into the ownership of comparatively few people. Capital also was becoming more and more concentrated, and the town labourers had no alternative but to sell their labour to the capitalist for what he would give.

Comparing the open and enclosed village, Slater says: "In the open field village the entirely landless labourer was scarcely to be found. . . . If he had no holding, he still might have a common right; if no acknowledged common right, he might enjoy the advantage of one in a greater or less degree. . . . From the poorest labourer to the richest farmer, there was, in the typical open field village, a gradation of rank. . . . It was easy for the efficient or fortunate man to rise on such a social ladder. . . . After enclosure the comparatively few surviving farmers—enriched, elevated intellectually as well as socially by the successful struggle with a new environment—faced, across a deep social gulf, the labourers who had now only their labour to depend on."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Professor Nicholson, *History of the English Corn Laws*: "Between 1821 and 1831 there was an absolute decrease in the number of families in agriculture, in spite of an increase of about 19 per cent. in the aggregate number of families in Great Britain. . . . Again . . . if we compare 1831 with 1841, with an absolute increase in population of over two millions, there was an absolute decrease in the number of adult males employed in agriculture" (p. 119).

<sup>2</sup> Slater, p. 130.

## CHAPTER XII

### DEPOPULATION OF RURAL ENGLAND

The last revolt—Joseph Arch—Landlords and Farmers against labourers—The Labourers' Union—Enclosures in the nineteenth century—The New Domesday Book—Landowning in the counties, statistics—Agricultural Returns, 1876—Commission on Agricultural Depression, 1882—Effect of high rents—Arable land reverts to pasture—Government small-holding schemes fail—Tenants better off than owners—The Isle of Axholme—Joseph Arch and small holdings—The New Forest commoners—Small farms and common rights—Report of 1897 on Agricultural Depression—Depopulation continues and pasture increases—Majority Report and high rents—Purchasers of farms in times of high prices—Denmark and the depression—Labourers migrate to the towns—Unemployment and pauperism.

#### 1. *The last revolt. Joseph Arch and the Labourers' Union.*

It has been seen that the last active revolt of the agricultural worker took place in 1830, and now, in the year 1872,<sup>1</sup> a revolt of another kind is attempted. It is true, of course, that by this time the mischief was done—the land was monopolized, the country-side denuded of the commons, and the peasant turned into a landless serf—but a final effort was to be made to increase starvation wages and to better conditions.

In March of 1872 Joseph Arch, a Warwickshire peasant, came forward as the leader of the landless, and formed the Warwickshire Agricultural Labourers' Union. The idea spread rapidly, for conditions were desperate, and by May was formed a National Union of Agricultural Labourers, whose membership in May 1873 had risen to some 70,000, and to over 86,000 in the following year.

Enormous difficulties attended the formation of such a Union, for rural districts were so sparsely peopled that there was little feeling of cohesion between the labourers of different districts, and the expense of propaganda among a people so widely scattered was very great; also wages were so low as

<sup>1</sup> Trade Unions were legalized in 1871.

to make it difficult for any to pay even the smallest subscription to a Union, and the prevalence of the " tied cottage " system made many a labourer hesitate to join.

The skilled agricultural worker was starving on a wage which averaged 10s. per week, but rents were high, for they had doubled since the beginning of the century, and the price of wheat was 57s. a quarter. With such a starvation wage there was little possibility of purchasing meat, and this article of food was often not seen in the labourers' cottages for months on end. What a difference from the way in which the peasant lived in the time of Domesday, and even for some centuries after !

## 2. *The Union's demands. Labourers beaten by landlords and farmers.*

The demands of Arch and the Union were not exorbitant ; they wanted a 9½-hour day and a wage of 16s. per week. But in spite of the yeoman work done by Arch and others, the movement to a large extent failed, and the Union broke up. In 1879 the membership was down to 20,000, and by 1889 it had sunk to 4,000. From the start of the Union there had been much victimization of the labourers, farmers often discharging their workers from their work and their cottages at a week's notice if they refused to leave the Union.<sup>1</sup>

In revolts prior to 1830 the small tenants and labourers had usually received help from copyholders and freeholders against the landlords and great farmers, but from now onwards it was the landless labourer against the farmer and the landlord. For the farmer was now in the clutches of the landowner ; he was usually a yearly tenant, and he had no security for any improvements he might put into the soil. The labourer was an outcast and helpless ; he had become a landless serf, and except for some small increases in wages in a few localities, this, his last effort to throw off his bonds, only resulted in a lucky few being helped to migrate to other parts of the country or to emigrate to the Colonies.

<sup>1</sup> A lock-out was started in the eastern counties in 1874, and some 10,000 labourers were affected.

**3. *The work of the Union—supply of agricultural labour reduced. Farmers labour-starve their land.***

Joseph Arch and the National Union received, in addition to members' subscriptions, a certain amount of money from well-wishers outside the movement; and this was used to a large extent in finding the labourers work in industrial towns and in assisting them to emigrate. Arch himself believed that, as the farmers would not raise wages, the best way to compel them to do so was to make agricultural labour scarce. Giving evidence before the Royal Commission on Agriculture, 1882, he was asked: "How do you set about ensuring the labourers getting higher wages?"<sup>1</sup> He replied: "We have reduced the number of labourers in the market very considerably. We have emigrated about 700,000 souls—men, women, and children—within the last eight or nine years. I went over to Canada, and I made arrangements with the Canadian Government to give them so much, and we found them so much from the funds of our trade."<sup>2</sup>

Arch goes on to say that this did not result in higher wages, for farmers continued to labour-starve their land, and he states that many cottages had been pulled down and decayed during the previous twenty years. He further adds:<sup>3</sup> "I do not say that a farmer is compelled to keep them, but I do say this, and I say it from forty years' experience, that it has been the policy of the farmers to labour-starve the land, and their policy has been that, although they have suffered great losses (and some of them have suffered losses this fall) through not having sufficient labour to get their wheat in at the proper time, they would not employ the labour. I am going to give facts, whether they are agreeable or not, and I say that it has been the policy of the farmer, notwithstanding that the land has wanted labour, to turn the labourer off as soon as the harvest has been got in on purpose to get a miserably low winter wage as the stipulated wage of the district." Arch was then asked: "He may do it out of ignorance; but do you think it is from any other reason than from ignorance?"<sup>4</sup> And his reply was: "I cannot

<sup>1</sup> Question 58421.

<sup>2</sup> There can be no doubt that this was harmful to agriculture, although it merely did in a short time what would have happened in the course of a few years.

<sup>3</sup> No. 60264.

<sup>4</sup> No. 60268.

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conceive how a man can be ignorant when he sees a field of corn just coming up full of rubbish and wanting labour, and he says, 'I will not employ the labour.' "

### 4. *Enclosures in latter half of nineteenth century.*

Enclosures still continued after the general Act of 1845, and even after 1873, but they were small in extent. Parliamentary enclosure of common fields since this latter date has accounted for some 14,842 acres.<sup>1</sup> It has been estimated <sup>2</sup> that since 1845 some 100,000 acres of common-field arable and commonable meadow have been enclosed, of which some 30,000 acres alone were enclosed by Act of Parliament. Common fields and commonable meadows were estimated to comprise not more than 30,000 acres in 1903—a fact which testifies to the thoroughness of the enclosures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In enclosures after 1845 some allotment had to be made for parks or for allotments for the poor, but from that date until 1875, out of a total of 590,000 acres enclosed only 1,758 acres were for recreation grounds and 2,195 acres for allotments for the poor. In 1876 the administration of the Enclosure Acts was taken over by the Board of Agriculture, and referring to this Slater says: "The administration of the Act since 1877 is . . . a very severe condemnation of its administration in the earlier period."

After the middle of the century enclosures were of little consequence, and by means of the public-spirited action of a few people, some open spaces and commons which were threatened with enclosure were saved for the public. One such instance was when the lord of the manor of Berkhamstead enclosed the common of about 500 acres in 1866, and Mr. Augustus Smith, one of the commoners, with the assistance of a train-load of navvies from London, broke down the enclosure during the night, and won the ensuing lawsuit.<sup>3</sup>

### 5. *The New Domesday Book—the land monopoly in practice.*

In 1876 <sup>4</sup> was issued a Government paper, purporting to be a return of all owners of land in England and Wales. This

<sup>1</sup> Slater, p. 191.

<sup>2</sup> For these and following statistics, see Slater.

<sup>3</sup> *Reports of the Commons Preservation Society.*

<sup>4</sup> Inquiry of 1874-5. Abstract presented as House of Commons paper, May 1876, intitled "Summary of Returns of Owners of Land in England and Wales."

was the first survey since the time of the Conqueror, and has been called the New Domesday Book. The return is inaccurate, but it enables us to obtain a very good idea of the change in tenure wrought by the enclosure movement and of what is meant when we have spoken of land monopoly.

The story told by this Return is even worse than it appears at first sight, for the number of owners is considerably overstated. Persons owning land in different districts were counted as separate owners; copyholders and leaseholders for ninety-nine years or longer were counted as owners. Woods, wastes, and commons, and lands not rated were not included in the enumeration. But more important than all this is the fact that the number of those owning *less than 1 acre* is two-thirds of the total, and as these holdings are usually only very small allotments or gardens attached to houses, they might quite well be omitted, as the *total area* is negligible.

The Return itself, without any correction, gives 972,836 persons as owners of 33,000,000 acres, of whom 703,289 own *less than 1 acre*. The Hon. George C. Brodrick, in *English Land and English Landlords*, calculates that 4,000 persons owning estates of 1,000 acres and upwards have 19,000,000 acres, or four-sevenths of the area dealt with, and, making allowances for double entries and other errors, 150,000 persons own all holdings *above 1 acre*. Arnold, in *Free Land*, working on this Return, was of opinion that 525 members of the peerage were counted as 1,500, and he gives 7,000 persons as the owners of four-fifths of the land of the United Kingdom. Taking the enclosed land of England and Wales as dealt with in the New Domesday Book, we may say, roughly speaking, that a little more than 2,000 persons own half the land.

In order to appreciate the significance of these figures, and to realize the extent to which the land of England had become concentrated in the hands of a few, we might recall Gregory King's estimate, that in 1696, before the last great enclosure movement had begun, there were 160,000 *freeholders* with incomes from £55 to £90 per annum.

#### 6. *Landowning in the counties—great majority of people landless.*

The position appears even more startling when we look a little closer into the figures of a few agricultural counties.

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In Norfolk we find that 15 peers held one-seventh of the land, 1,348 persons owned between them three-quarters of the county; 16,552 persons owned 2,468 acres, or one five hundred and fiftieth of the county; and 412,820 persons were entirely *landless*.

In *Essex* 5 peers held one-sixteenth of the area; 1,471 persons more than three-quarters of the total area; 14,833 persons owned less than 1 acre and shared 4,033 acres; and 444,656 persons were *landless*.

In *Hertfordshire* 10 peers owned over one-fifth of the county; 439 persons owned over three-quarters; 9,556 persons owning less than 1 acre shared 2,339 acres, and 180,047 persons were *landless*.

In *Hampshire* 859 persons owned nearly three-quarters of the county, and 517,467 persons were *landless*.

In *Oxfordshire* 57 persons owned nearly one-third of the total area, 534 persons three-quarters of the area, and 168,118 were *landless*.

In *Surrey* 556 persons owned three-quarters of the land and 325,032 were *landless*.

All counties tell the same tale of consolidation and monopoly, but we have cited sufficient to show that in 1876 the great majority of the people of this country were without a foothold in the land, without a claim to a square inch of it. We shall learn later that matters are little better at the present day.

### 7. *Agricultural Returns of 1876. England becoming more dependent on foreign supplies. Some Domesday comparisons.*

The Agricultural Returns of 1876 afford some interesting comparisons with earlier and later statistics of production in this country, and are an indication of the fruits of denuding the country-side of workers, and so making this country dependent on foreign food supplies.

The population of Great Britain had probably more than quadrupled since the time of Gregory King's estimate, but whereas his estimate of the area of arable land in England and Wales was 11,000,000 acres, it was only 14,519,613 acres



in 1876, or including Scotland, 18,028,137, and of this 4,540,000 acres consisted of artificial grasses.

Referring to wheat, the Report says : " The acreage under wheat in the United Kingdom in 1876 was 3,124,000 acres, being 11 % less than in 1875 and 22 % less than in 1869, when the area under that crop was greater than in any other year from 1868 to 1876. In Great Britain alone the decrease from 1875 was 10 %, and from 1869, 19 %. . . . The still larger decrease appears in the stock of sheep, which is less by 1,000,000 since 1875, and by more than 2,000,000 since 1874." King estimated sheep at 11,000,000, and in 1876 in England and Wales there were 21,183,232. Cattle and pigs seem hardly to have increased at all since 1696. In this year King puts the cattle at 4,500,000, and in 1876 there were 4,715,215, and pigs had only increased from 2,000,000 to 2,139,521.

Corn crops, including *beans* and *peas*, grown in England in 1876 covered 7,278,286 acres, of which less than one-half would be wheat. The Domesday estimate of 5,000,000 acres for corn alone, of which nearly 3½ million acres were probably wheat, makes this amount look very small, especially when it is remembered that the average produce per acre at this time was about *seven times* the Domesday yield.

To take two counties as an example. Buckinghamshire at the time of Domesday had 269,000 acres of arable land. In 1876 corn crops, beans, and peas accounted for 132,707 acres, and 191,250 acres were *permanent pasture*. The Domesday Sussex had 371,000 acres of arable, and in 1876 corn crops, beans, and peas covered 209,026 acres, and *permanent pasture* 267,000 acres.

Is it any wonder that, with such scanty use made of the land, England had long since ceased to feed her population ?

**8. Commission on Agricultural Depression, 1882. Landlords and large farmers suffer from bad seasons and foreign competition.**

Having denuded the country-side, turned the remaining labourers into landless serfs, brought unemployment and destitution to the towns, and allowed the ownership of the land to become concentrated into the hands of a few thousand territorial lords, the Government has periodically appointed

Commissions to inquire into agricultural distress. Agricultural distress since the eighteenth century usually meant a period of *low prices*, when large farmers were in a bad way and landlords had difficulty in getting their rents; it had no reference to the condition of the agricultural labourers, for they were permanently depressed. One such Commission was appointed in 1882, and reported that the depression was due to a succession of four bad seasons and foreign competition. The Report states: "While the difficulties of the farmers have been thus increased, higher wages and more general employment have proportionately improved the condition of the labourer.<sup>1</sup> It is most satisfactory to be assured that the labouring class has been scarcely, if at all, affected by the distress which has fallen so heavily upon owners as well as occupiers. Provisions have been cheap and employment abundant, while wages in a few districts only have been slightly reduced." This is followed by a complaint about the deterioration in the standard of work of the labourer. Joseph Arch,<sup>2</sup> in giving evidence on this point, said it was wrong to say that the standard had fallen, but that owing to the great migration from the villages only the inferior labour was left; and judging from the evidence of Arch and others, there is little indication that *wages or conditions* had improved. From the tables of wages in Prothero's *English Farming, Past and Present*, we find that in every district in England money wages had fallen since 1872.

The Report also states that many farmers had complained of the Education Act as seriously affecting labour. They admit that it may have benefited the labourers, but say that it had compelled them to employ men where they formerly had boys. Not content with the reduction of the peasant to a landless serf, objection was now raised to his education.

### 9. *The effect of high rents.*

In a Supplementary Memorandum to this Report Mr. John Clay throws light on another side of the question. He writes: "With reference to the subject of rent, ample evidence has been given before the Commission on this most important subject, its increase during the last twenty-five years, and the

<sup>1</sup> The improvement was microscopic.

<sup>2</sup> No. 60234.

great losses that tenant farmers have sustained thereby. The Report does not sufficiently deal with this increase as an important factor in the agricultural depression and one which has helped to bring about the present crisis in the agriculture of the country. . . . Sir James Caird puts the rise of rent in England for the last eighteen years at 21 %, and in Scotland at 26 %, but I have no doubt that if we went back twenty-five years the rise would be 25 % for England and 30 % for Scotland."

#### 10. *Arable land reverting to permanent pasture.*

Sir Robert Giffen, in giving evidence before the Commission, speaks of the continued conversion of arable to pasture. Between the years 1867-9 and 1878-80 1,800,000 acres, formerly waste or unreclaimed, were added to the cultivated area of the United Kingdom. "But, on the other hand, we find that in the same period there is the well-known fact of a diminution of the arable land and an increase of the permanent pasture to the extent of about 1,000,000 acres ; and I think that that would justify us in saying that, against the increase of production at home, which might be due to the increased area, we may set the transfer of land from arable to permanent pasture, so that there is no reason why we should say that there ought to be more production in the last three years than there was in the three years from 1867-9, and so far as I have conversed with agricultural authorities they seem rather to agree with that."

#### 11. *Government small-holding schemes a failure.*

In 1889 there was appointed a Select Committee of the House of Commons on small holdings, and in 1892 a Small Agricultural Holdings Act came into force. This Act empowered County Councils to purchase or lease land for small holdings where there was a demand, and was apparently intended as an attempt to replace some of the dispossessed on the land. It will be seen, however, in the next chapter <sup>1</sup> that there were forces at work making it difficult for a labourer even to make application for a holding, and unfortunately the administration of the Act was in the hands of the land-

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter XIII, par. 3.

lords and farmers, who were opposed to the increase of small holdings.

In the Final Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture, issued in 1897, it was stated that from 1892 to 1895 only *eight counties* in the whole of Great Britain had taken any proceedings under the Act; that only *483 acres* had been bought and let as small holdings; and that these were generally overburdened with debt. The rent charged for holdings purchased in this way is always considerably higher than that of surrounding land, and sinking fund charges and a sum to be paid as an instalment of the purchase price have usually made it difficult for the small holder to keep free of debt or to compete with the farmer.

**12. *Tenants in better position than owners. Prosperity of allotment holders in Axholme.***

As with County Council small holdings, so with other peasant-proprietorships, it is found that *tenants* at a fair rental are always better off than those who have bought their holdings, generally in a boom year, and are heavily involved in the hands of mortgagees; but it is also found that small holders and small farmers not so heavily involved are able to weather periods of bad times better than the large farmer.

In the Final Report of 1897 the Assistant Commissioner for Lincolnshire, reporting on the Isle of Axholme, said that the position was gloomy, but that tenants were better off than owners. Of those who had bought their holdings fifteen or twenty years before, 90 % had either been sold up or were struggling on in a hopeless condition at the mercy of the mortgagees. Referring to these cases, Dr. Slater says: "Their prosperity with steadier prices revived exceptionally quickly."

The same writer also quotes a table submitted to the Select Committee of 1889, showing holdings of land in the parish of Epworth as follows:

Of holdings over 200 acres there are				2 occupiers	
"	"	100	" and under 200 acres	12	"
"	"	50	" "	100	" 14 "
"	"	20	" "	50	" 31 "
"	"	10	" "	20	" 40 "
"	"	2	" "	10	" 115 "
"	"	$\frac{1}{2}$	acre "	2	" 80 "

He says: "The 80 holders occupying from  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 acres would all be men in regular employment,<sup>1</sup> as a rule agricultural labourers. A body of these sent their deposition to the Select Committee in the following form: 'We, the undersigned, being agricultural labourers at Epworth, are in occupation of allotments or small holdings, varying from 2 roods to 3 acres, willingly testify to the great benefit we find from our holdings. Where we have sufficient quantity of land to grow 2 roods each of wheat, barley and potatoes, we have bread, bacon and potatoes for a great part of the year, enabling us to face a long winter without the dread of hunger or pauperism starving us in the face.' "

### 13. *Joseph Arch supports small holdings.*

All reports on Agricultural Depression testify to the fact that the small tenant is in a better position than the man who has purchased, and also that where the labourer has access to a little land he is in a sounder position than when he is entirely landless. When he was examined before the Agricultural Commission of 1882, Joseph Arch was asked about the Chartist allotments established by Feargus O'Connor in the neighbourhood of Witney and Dodwell, near Birmingham, and at Snugg's End in Gloucestershire.<sup>2</sup> Many of these holdings varied in extent from 3 to 6 acres, and Arch said that the occupiers had done well. Of those with smaller holdings of 2 or 3 acres, many worked as labourers for about half their time. "The advantage to the farmer will be that he will get a good, well-fed, hearty, strong man; but where you keep him down on a miserable wage, and he has no other means of getting a shilling, he is a poor, half-starved being not fit for work." He added that some of these 3 or 4-acre men were entirely independent of the farmers, as they bred poultry, did carrying or hawking, and carried on little businesses.<sup>3</sup>

When asked whether the sites of the estates were not bad, he replied: "The Minster Lovel Estate was almost a barren and useless waste when they took it; so was the

<sup>1</sup> Slater states that the general wage level was high, although the district was a long way from any large town.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 60192 *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup> No. 60205.

Dodwell Farm, near Birmingham, where they grow more strawberries on an acre of land than they do on two acres in some parts of England.”<sup>1</sup>

“Then they have improved the land, and they have fairly managed to sustain themselves?”—“Yes, they have turned the waste and wild, and made it a fruitful field.”<sup>2</sup>

He was further asked: “We have evidence from all parts of the country showing us that farmers instead of making any money have lost far more than the rent they paid; what would have been the position of your 5-acre man during any period of these last five or six years?—I will tell you what the position of them is in Minster Lovel: the men that had their 4 and 5 acres there in 1872 and 1873 hold them to-day; that is their position, they have got their land.”<sup>3</sup> “The opinion that I have is this: I saw one of them the other day, and he has been upon the farm since 1873, and he said: ‘With all the losses that the farmers complain about, I can keep my chin above water.’”<sup>4</sup>

#### 14. *Prosperity of the New Forest commoners and small farmers.*

In the Final Report of the Royal Commission of 1897 there is an interesting account of how, amidst the depression in agriculture, which was said to be due to bad seasons and foreign competition, the small holders and commoners of the New Forest were faring.

The Commissioner for this district reported that their prosperity was remarkable, their land highly cultivated, and rents averaging £2 per acre tithe free. The commoners enjoyed practically three livings:

1. The land.
2. Common rights—pasture, fuel, turbary and pannage.
3. Small industries, such as hawking and dealing.

He states: “It is extraordinary to me; the more I look into it and the more I learn about the state of things in the New Forest, the more astonished I am. The way in which these people work, and the way in which they save, and the way in which they seem to have money whenever they want it

<sup>1</sup> No. 60212.

<sup>2</sup> No. 60213.

<sup>3</sup> No. 60441.

<sup>4</sup> No. 60446.

for their own purposes is sometimes quite a mystery to me how they do it; I know they do do it." The comparative prosperity of these commoners will not be so mysterious to those who have studied the history of land tenure in this country.

15. *Prosperity due to small farms, intensive culture, and valuable common rights.*

Mr. Channing refers to this district in his Report, and testifies to the prosperity of the small holder and commoner. He states that the policy of consolidating farms in the New Forest had failed, and that the largest type of holding was only 100 acres. The holdings of the commoners varied from 6 to 20 acres, those of about 12 acres being the best, and the common rights had been secured by Act of Parliament. Land that would sell for £20 to £25 per acre in large farms fetched about £40 per acre in small holdings; and in sales held at that time some land in small parcels had fetched £100 per acre. Owing to the depression, farm land in the neighbourhood had fallen one-half, but the small holdings had not decreased in value. With reference to the produce of these farms, the Commissioner reports that a quarter of the area of the holding is usually arable, cultivated intensively and with the spade. This produces turnips, potatoes, and other vegetables, and winter food for the cows. The remainder is pasture and orchard. Cows and pigs are very profitable, and pork, butter, poultry, and eggs are produced and sold to itinerant dealers.

Mr. B. Eyre gives further testimony as to conditions in this district: "Everybody turns out something. Many labourers double their wages by stock-keeping, and some have been known to save all their wages for a series of years, making their living by forest rights. A labouring man will get hold of one animal somehow—a cow or a mare—and then that makes the foundation of his fortune. . . . When once they have something like £5 either in stock or money, they then go steadily up in the social scale. . . . They reckon that if a man turns out a lot of pigs of all sizes in a good mast season he will clear 10s. per pig."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This throws light on the value of common rights.

**16. Report of 1897—depression due to fall in prices. Consolidation of farms, decay of buildings, and conversion of arable. Small farms and mixed holdings suffer least.**

The depression reported on in 1897 was again a period of abundance and low prices, and rents were in danger. The Report stated that: "With a few exceptions the seasons since 1882 have been on the whole satisfactory from an agriculture point of view; and the evidence before us has shown that the existing depression is to be attributed mainly to the fall in prices of farm produce." This fall was most marked in the case of wheat and wool, and the Report continues: "We find that the effects of agricultural depression have made themselves most apparent in the arable counties; and that in counties where the surroundings are such as to favour dairying, market-gardening, poultry-farming, and other special industries the conditions are somewhat more favourable."<sup>1</sup>

The evidence obtained by this Commission throws considerable light on the evil results of land monopoly, the consolidation of farms starved of labour, the rack-renting and insecurity of tenure.<sup>2</sup> Some of the effects of enclosure can now be seen, for whenever there is depression, back goes arable land to pasture, and the labourer drifts to the town. Mr. Hunter Pringle, Commissioner for Essex, reported: "Between 1880 and 1884 the number of farms given up, either in despair or for reasons over which the occupiers had no control, was stated to have been enormous. . . . On poor estates no attempt was made to bring the land round; it was left alone, and gradually 'tumbled down' to such coarse and inferior herbage as Nature produced. . . . Many farms, after lying derelict for a few years, were let as grass runs for young stock at nominal rents." He adds that rents had had to be reduced from 25 % to 80 %.

Reporting on Suffolk and Cambridge, Mr. Fox stated that the condition of the land had gone back, and was frequently

<sup>1</sup> Large-scale farming did not pay.

<sup>2</sup> See Report of Welsh Land Commission, 1896, p. 300: "With reference to almost every district that we visited . . . we were repeatedly assured by an overwhelming preponderance of the witnesses that many tenants were afraid to come forward to give evidence, and the main consideration in producing that fear was stated to be the precarious and insecure nature of the tenancy from year to year under which nearly all the farms are held in Wales."



foul and choked with weeds, buildings were falling into disrepair, and owners were worse off than occupiers. Mr. Rew, referring to Norfolk, said that farmers of considerable capital formerly living in good style <sup>1</sup> were now on the verge of ruin.

From Berkshire, Hertfordshire, and Oxfordshire came the same story of land tumbling down to grass; and in Somersetshire, Devonshire, and Cornwall there was also much conversion to pasture. Mr. Pringle, referring to other counties in the arable section—Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire, and Northamptonshire—said: “Those who have not put their eggs too much in the wrong basket—corn-growing—grass farmers, fen farmers, market-gardeners, and dairy-farmers, have done best of all.” <sup>2</sup>

With regard to Leicestershire, the evidence was said to be “conflicting” and the “depression less manifest.” But there, we are told, the farms were mostly mixed and under 200 acres. In the north and north-east there was competition for farms.

*17. Further great increase of pasture at expense of arable.  
Depopulation continues at a rapid rate.*

This Report discloses the enormous extent of arable land converted to pasture. It states: “One prominent feature of the depression has been the great contraction of the area of land under the plough in all parts of the country. The actual loss of arable area in the interval covered by the last two decades, which may be said to enclose the period of depression, is 2,137,000 acres, and that the diminution of the wheat acreage alone accounts for more than 1,900,000 acres of this loss.” The figures given are for Great Britain:

		Arable.	Pasture.
1875	.. ..	18,104,000	13,312,000
1888	.. ..	17,202,000	15,342,000
1895	.. ..	15,967,000	16,611,000

So that with an increasing population the country was producing less and less food.

Referring to the further depopulation of the country-side, the report states: “We find that in the purely arable counties of the east of England, and in some of the counties

<sup>1</sup> See Question 60256 in the Report of 1882. Arch considered that many farmers wasted their money in high living.

<sup>2</sup> The “gentleman farmer” scorned to grow anything but wheat or to keep pigs.

in the south and west, there has been since 1892 a further and considerable reduction of the number of men employed, while those still engaged have in many instances suffered from irregularity of employment and from a fall in wages."

The Commissioner for Essex reports that "on holdings where grass has been substituted for cultivated crops, and on three-horse farms where land has gone out of cultivation, few labourers are employed on the land. . . . Where formerly three labourers earned a livelihood, not one will be found now." In the twenty years 1871-91, the population of England and Wales had increased by 6,955,888, but the number of agricultural labourers had decreased by 242,053. As the Report says: "It is unnecessary for us to enlarge on the significance of these figures." Unfortunately, however, the story does not end in 1891, for the 1901<sup>1</sup> Census disclosed the fact that over 150,000 more agricultural labourers had gone, making some 400,000 since 1871, who with wives and children would be little less than 2,000,000 souls. Between 1881 and 1901, while the population of England and Wales increased by 25 %, the number of agricultural workers decreased by 27 %.<sup>2</sup>

#### 18. *Majority Report again overlooks importance of high rents and delay in reducing rents.*

The Supplementary Reports of Mr. Channing and Mr. Lambert draw attention to the question of *rents* and the depression. The Majority Report dismisses the tenant farmers' evidence on this point as being "interested," but it is difficult to understand in what way the landlords' evidence was any less "interested." Mr. Channing says: "These instances from the accounts supplied are more than confirmed by the mass of evidence—substantially unchallenged—to the effect that excessive rents<sup>3</sup> have brought, and are bringing, vast numbers of farmers to ruin; that rents have been insufficiently and too

<sup>1</sup> The 1901 Census shows that out of 674 rural districts in England and Wales, 408 had declined in population. To give a few examples, population declined in Lincolnshire by 8.1 %; in Surrey by 15 %; in Sussex by 16 %; in Oxfordshire by 18.7 %; in Buckinghamshire by 20.2 %; and in Bedfordshire by 23.8 %.

<sup>2</sup> Booth, *Occupation of the People* (1886): "Between 1851 and 1881 the numbers of those engaged in agriculture declined from 1,759,600 to 1,341,000."

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Fyshe, in giving evidence, put "high rents" before low prices as a cause of depression. (Question 53946).

tardily reduced; and that the soil has been steadily deteriorated by the ruin and impoverishment of tenants, owing to the disproportionate share of the diminishing receipts which has had to be taken for rents."

Mr. Lambert reports to the same effect, and quotes the Lincolnshire Commissioner who said: "It certainly does seem strange to go into a great agricultural county like Lincolnshire, which possesses splendid stock and much fine land, and to find New Zealand and Danish butter<sup>1</sup> largely sold in the towns." It is, indeed, strange, and one wonders if there had been no enclosing movement, and if the community had retained its interest in the soil, whether such a phenomenon could be possible.

Mr. Lambert further adds that in a large proportion of cases the reductions in rent did not come until many of the old tenants were ruined, or came too late to save them. He also refers to a very general complaint that the farmer who farmed well did not get the reduction obtained by the farmer who farmed badly, for in the case of old tenants on land highly improved there is "not a shadow of freedom of contract."

### 19. *Owners of small farms again worse off than tenants. Farms purchased in times of high prices.*

There is valuable evidence in this Report as to the relative conditions of small owners and small tenants. Those who own their farms are usually worse off than tenants on account of mortgage indebtedness; and the purchase seems to have been made in times of high prices,<sup>2</sup> often "at double value." The Commissioner for Norfolk says: "A good many of our farmers some twenty-five years ago were told that the best thing that they could do was to buy their farms, and they did so. But they had not enough cash, and they had to mortgage their farms."

The Commissioner for Lincolnshire, referring to the same matter, says: "But the position of these men is not only worse than tenants, because they have a higher rent in the shape of interest, but because to the land they have bought they are irrevocably bound, for they cannot sell it without

<sup>1</sup> The import of dairy produce in 1896 amounted to £24,000,000, an increase of £10,000,000 over 1876.

<sup>2</sup> As was done during the Napoleonic wars and the Great War (1914-18), the results being similar in each case (see Chapter XIII).

going out as ruined men, and they cannot let it for a sufficient rent to pay the interest on their mortgages."

**20. *Small Danish farms scarcely affected by depression.***

A Report<sup>1</sup> on Agricultural Depression in Denmark was obtained for this Commission from Mr. R. Schou, Secretary to the Royal Danish Agricultural Society. His Report showed that in the majority of cases the depression was little felt, and not at all amongst the small farms. His figures are significant :

*Large farms* of 250-300 acres (large number rented), 1,900. These are supposed to have felt falling prices keenly during the previous year.

*Smaller farms* (94 % worked by owners), 74,000.

These were affected, but less so, "chiefly owing to their size."

*Small farms* of 7 to 10 acres, 150,000.

These scarcely felt the crisis, and the prices of these farms had, if anything, risen.

Mr. Schou also drew attention to the fact that, as far as agriculture was concerned, protective duties did not exist.

**21. *Land workers flock to towns, causing sweating and unemployment. Periodical industrial depressions increase pauperism and unemployed surplus. Overcrowding and value of town sites enhanced.***

All through the period under review there was a large amount of unemployment in the towns, with recurring periods of exceptional depression. Trade and industry fluctuated, and in periods of bad trade the unemployed surplus expanded. The continual drain from the country-side made wages low and caused unemployment in the towns, for the country labourer, being usually strong and healthy, was frequently able to displace the town worker.

The Transactions and Reports of the House of Lords Committee on the Sweating System (1888-90) provide an enormous mass of evidence to the effect that sweating and

unemployment in the towns were largely caused by the inrush of agricultural workers. Lord Dunraven's Report (Fifth Report) disclosed a terrible state of affairs among the London dock labourers, who were suffering from the evils of casual work and the competition of workers from the villages.

The great trek to the towns during the previous twenty years seems to have been largely responsible for the increase in the numbers of casual workers at the docks and the reduction of wages to a microscopic point. Mr. Tillett, a dockers' leader, in evidence said :

(12670) "A docker sixteen or eighteen years ago could average right throughout the year about 24s. or 25s. a week ; now the same man does not average more than 7s. right through. . . . Fifteen or eighteen years ago if the dock people did not take their men in at a particular hour, they had no opportunity of finding them if they came out an hour or two afterwards."

(12853) "There are 50 per cent. of the dock labourers that really have either come from the land themselves or are the children of the farm labourer."<sup>1</sup>

With reference to the origin of these competitors for work at the docks, Mr. Tillett said :

(13570) "My point and experience is this, that *for every acre of land that goes into disuse we get somebody up here.*"

The Rev. J. Munro (First Report, 1417-18, 1436, etc.) also gave much evidence to the same effect, and, referring to sweating among women, said : "If we could stop the people coming up from the provinces we would materially aid the seamstresses (and, we may add, the working women generally) of East London."

This evidence is similar to that given by a large number of other witnesses, who saw clearly enough the connection

<sup>1</sup> An investigation conducted for the Royal Commission on the Poor Law in 1906 gives a good example of this. It was found that 66 % of the men in the Inner Division of the Metropolitan Police Force were country born, and 25 % had been used to farm work. Of the Glasgow police, 91 % were country born, and 47 % had worked on farms. The Report also states that, "taking 12,558 workpeople employed by sixteen large municipal corporations in England, 37 % were country born and 22 % had been farm labourers."

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between the depopulated villages and the crowded dens of East London. There is also considerable evidence which goes to show that not only agricultural labourers, but small tradesmen and artisans, whose living disappeared as the villages declined, also came to the towns and competed with, and displaced, town workers.

In the Final Report of the Royal Commission on the Depression of Trade and Industry, Appendix K (1886), Mr. Arthur O'Connor referred to many witnesses who had shown how the general depression had begun in agriculture, and that the diminished purchasing power of the villages had affected the whole community.

### *22. Unemployment statistics. Wages low and a large section of the population below the poverty line.*

There are no complete statistics of unemployment during this period, but Trade Union figures give some indication of the state of things. In 1873 the percentage of unemployed among members was 1·2, and this rose gradually to 11·4 % in 1879. In 1880 it was 5·5 %, and in 1882 2·3 %, and this rose to 10·2 % in 1886. In 1887 it was 7·6 %, in 1890 2·1 %, and in 1893 it had risen to 7·5 %. In 1894 it was 6·9 %, and this fell to 2 % in 1899. By 1904 it had risen to 6 %, and after falling to 3·6 % in 1906 and 3·7 % in 1907, it rose to 7·8 % in 1908, and 7·7 % in 1909, and then fell again to 2·1 % in 1913.

In 1867 a Mansion House Relief Fund was opened for the unemployed, and in subsequent years appeals were frequently made. In 1886 there were riots in Trafalgar Square, and 1893, 1904 and 1908 were years of exceptional depression. In the year 1905-6 there were 110,000 applications to Distress Committees for relief. In 1881 the mean number of paupers relieved was 790,937, and in 1904 the number was 837,680.<sup>1</sup>

Taking the matter generally, we may say that throughout the period under consideration there has always been a surplus of unemployed, increasing to large proportions during periods of bad trade, and that a very large proportion of the population has struggled along on a wage which placed them below the poverty line.

<sup>1</sup> Local Government Board Reports.

## CHAPTER XIII

### LAND MONOPOLY BEFORE AND AFTER THE GREAT WAR

Land monopoly and the Great War—Land Inquiry Committee, 1913—Small holdings wanted, but practically unobtainable—The great need, security of tenure—County Council small holding schemes fail—Fallacy of “too many acres”—Drain from country-side continues—Village housing conditions—The “tied” cottage; labourer unable to pay an economic rent—Low wages and rural depopulation—Consolidation and conversion continue—Arable and pasture compared—Waste and rough pasture; afforestation—Effect on production of increase of game—Conversion and depopulation—Arable area decreases since 1918—Wheat area below pre-war figure—County statistics—Decline in rural population, 1921—The war-time allotments—Great land sales; no farms to let—Land Settlement Scheme—Failure due to delay, high prices, lack of co-operation—Mixed holdings most successful—Can this country feed itself?—Scientific discoveries—Food production in Great Britain and other countries compared—Production in Denmark—Channel Isles and intensive culture—Possibilities of agricultural production in Great Britain—Productiveness of small holdings—Apathy of farming class—Country-side labour-starved—Post-war unemployment—Value of allotments—Rating system and housing—Difficulty in obtaining land—Dear land and overcrowding—The White Paper of 1913—The ring round the house.

#### 1. *Results of land monopoly accentuated by the Great War.*

The condition of the country-side in 1914, on the eve of the Great War, differed but little from the description already given of the latter part of the nineteenth century. In the five years preceding 1914 the Government had conducted a campaign throughout the country with the ostensible object of reforming the land system and striking a blow at land monopoly. Such a campaign naturally roused the antagonism of the landed interests. It had, however, a large following in the country, for public opinion was roused against the continuance of widespread pauperism, unemployment, bad housing, and the exodus from the country-side. Then came the Great War, and all thoughts of reform were forgotten. At the present day, therefore, all the bad conditions of 1914 exist

in a more accentuated form—pauperism and unemployment are rampant, the country-side further denuded of labour, arable land again being converted to pasture, the slums and towns overcrowded, and a shortage of houses such as never before experienced.

### 2. *Pre-war conditions. The Land Inquiry Committee.*

In order to appreciate fully the conditions of the towns and country at the present day, and the trend of events during the last decade, we must consider for a moment our land system as it had come to be in 1914.

In 1913 an unofficial Inquiry Committee was appointed at the instigation of the Prime Minister for the purpose of inquiring into the position of the agricultural industry and land holding in general. The inquiry was conducted through independent investigators—a method which has advantages over that of hearing witnesses—and the Report was issued in 1913. Separate reports were issued for England, Scotland and Wales, and all contain much valuable information of undoubtedly dependable quality.

In 1913 the holdings of over 300 acres made up 25 % of the total cultivated acreage, or in other words, the large farmers with more than 300 acres held nearly 7,000,000 acres; the holdings of from 1 to 5 acres comprised only 1 % of the total cultivated acreage; and those of 5 to 50 acres 15 %.

### 3. *Small holdings and allotments in great demand, but difficult to obtain. The dependence of the labourer.*

The Report<sup>1</sup> of the Land Inquiry Committee confirms what has already been learnt from various Government Reports, that access to the land is barred for the small man, the small holder or allotment holder, and owing to the tied cottage system and insecurity of tenure generally the labourer is often afraid to ask for a holding.<sup>2</sup> The Report states: "Over and over again our informants say that the demand for allotments and small holdings is not voiced, as the men are

<sup>1</sup> *The Land*, vol. i., *Rural*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164: "The labourers' fears, no doubt, are often groundless, but the occasions upon which they are justified are sufficiently numerous to cause widespread fear."



afraid of losing their work, their cottage, or both. To apply for a holding often means becoming a marked man. As one of our informants in Somersetshire says: 'To get a small holding means as a rule years of publicity of the fact that one is trying for it. And as this sort of thing is very unpopular among farmers, it can be imagined that a labourer thinks twice before risking the goodwill of his employers. I think that it is sufficiently understood by the labourers generally that they must not apply for land. . . . There is a sifting and selecting continually going on.' <sup>1</sup>

It was found that only about two-thirds of the villages in England and Wales had allotments, and that where these were not utilized it was for one or more of the following reasons:

1. The land is of poor quality or too highly rented.
2. Land is situated too far from the village.
3. There are large gardens in the village.
4. The hours of labour are too long to enable labourers to cultivate allotments.

The Report adds that "where they do apply, they are frequently unsuccessful, either because of (1) the apathy of the Council; (2) the hostility of the farmer; (3) the high price demanded for the land; or (4) the difficulty of putting the compulsory powers into force through the County Council." <sup>2</sup>

On this subject of allotments a farmer writes: "A man with 1 or 2 acres under absolute fixity of tenure can supplement his wages by growing abundant vegetables and fruit for his family, and can keep poultry and pigs. Even when temporarily out of work he has thus good food and healthy means of employment. I have known many men driven to emigrate because they could get neither land nor cottages here." <sup>3</sup>

#### 4. *Security of tenure wanted, not ownership.*

The conclusions of the Committee on the question of small holdings are that "there is a large unsatisfied demand . . . which frequently is not voiced owing to the fear of applying." <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Land*, p. 163.

<sup>3</sup> P. 159.

<sup>2</sup> P. 189.

<sup>4</sup> P. 229.

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As regards small holders under private landowners, these have "suffered considerably both from insecurity of tenure and high rents."<sup>1</sup> County Council small holders<sup>2</sup> have also suffered from high rents, largely due to—

- (a) Excessive price paid for land.
- (b) Cost of adaptation and equipment being unnecessarily large.
- (c) Sinking fund on equipment and adaptation too high.
- (d) The fact that sinking fund on the land is charged upon the rent.<sup>3</sup>

We have already had occasion to see that during the periods of so-called agricultural depression owners of small holdings were usually in a worse plight than tenants. Arthur Young spoke of the magic of ownership, but *security of tenure* is the real essence of the magic. As the Haversham Committee reported in 1911: "It is clear from the evidence that the main thing which the tenant farmers desire is to be able to remain on their farms, and it is usually when a farmer is unable to remain as a tenant, owing to the breaking up of estates, that he desires to become an occupying owner. There is little desire for ownership in itself, and it is only advocated as an alternative to being turned out of his home."<sup>4</sup>

### 5. *Failure of County Council schemes. Small holders who do not slavishly copy large farmers successful.*

The provision of small holdings by County Councils is shown to have been more or less of a failure. From 1892 to 1907 nine County Councils acquired 880 acres, but after the Small Holdings and Allotments Act of 1907 more was done. Up to 1912 County Councils acquired 155,000 acres, of which 105,000 were purchased and 50,000 leased,<sup>5</sup> and only 2 % of the holders provided for wished to purchase.<sup>6</sup> Of these holders, agricultural labourers comprised about 33 %, but

<sup>1</sup> P. 229.

<sup>2</sup> *The Land*, p. 163: "The Small Holdings and Allotments Act has to a large extent been deprived of its full value by the labourer's lack of independence."

<sup>3</sup> P. 229.

<sup>4</sup> P. 12 of the Report.

<sup>5</sup> Annual Report on Small Holdings, 1912.

<sup>6</sup> Less land has been cultivated by owners each year since 1887. In that year 15.22 % of the total cultivated area was cultivated by owners; in 1912 the percentage was 10.87 (Agricultural Statistics).

this proportion varied from 73 % in the Isle of Ely to 54 % in Cambridgeshire and 7 % in Somersetshire. These figures seem to suggest that in some districts at any rate the wrong class of men had been obtaining holdings.

The reports from investigators, farmers, etc., are almost unanimous to the effect that small holdings can produce more than large farms,<sup>1</sup> especially with stock and poultry. Many small holders, however, endeavour to copy the large farmer, and so lose money. "On the other hand, dairy-farming, market-gardening, and pig and poultry rearing, which require much personal attention, lose rather than gain by large-scale production, and can therefore be carried on with success by small holders."<sup>2</sup> With reference to this point, an Essex informant states: "In this district small holders very seldom grow any produce beyond corn, wheat, barley, oats, and beans, and as they have to compete with larger farmers of, say, 300 to 500 acres, who work with modern machinery and wholesale methods, the small holder has to work early and late, and often very severely, to make a living."<sup>3</sup> Since 1908 the number of small holdings has actually declined.

A calculation from figures furnished in the Report on Agricultural Output of Great Britain for 1908<sup>4</sup> shows that the average number of males regularly employed per 100 acres on different classes of holdings was as follows:

Holdings.				Males per 100 acres.	
1-5 acres	..	..	..	8.0	
5-50 "	..	..	..	4.3	
50-300 "	..	..	..	2.5	
Over 300 "	..	..	..	2.3	

## 6. Wastage and under-cultivation—the fallacy of "too many acres."

The material collected by the Inquiry Committee contains abundant evidence of the under-cultivation of the land,

<sup>1</sup> *The Land*, p. 207. A Berkshire land steward, formerly farmer's bailiff, writes: "One farm, 447 acres. The farmer employed in his *busy time*, 6 men, 1 boy. He possessed 6 horses and 20 milch cows. There are now upon the farm 14 small holders themselves and their families, 2 labourers, 3 boys, 19 horses, 9 colts raised this year, 37 milch cows, 1 bull, several calves, 300 head of poultry, 128 sheep, and 48 acres are used as common for grazing about 40 head of cattle extra."

<sup>2</sup> P. 199.

<sup>3</sup> P. 198.

<sup>4</sup> Cd. 6277, Table 18.

especially in the case of the large farms. Mr. Prothero (Lord Ernle), writing in 1912, said: "Thousands of acres of tillage and grass-land are comparatively wasted, underfarmed and undermanned. Countries whose climate is severer than our own, and in which poorer soils are cultivated, produce far more from the land than ourselves." <sup>1</sup>

In the Annual Report on Small Holdings for 1910 the Commissioners state: "It is no exaggeration to say that a considerable quantity of the soil of this country might be made to return at least twice as much as it does at present,<sup>2</sup> and if the results of scientific research can be brought home to the agricultural community, there is no reason why this result should not be achieved." As Professor Long says, "there is no greater fallacy than 'too many acres.'"<sup>3</sup>

Much evidence is also given to show that more could be produced if the system of mixed farming were extended, and the high rents per acre of small holdings compared with the lower rentals of large neighbouring farms are everywhere testified to. The large farms are usually too large for the farmer's capital, with the result that the land is labour-starved and rapidly deteriorates.

The conclusions arrived at by the Committee as to the causes of under-cultivation and low production are as follows: <sup>4</sup>

- (a) Insecurity of tenure.
- (b) Land labour-starved—best labour leaves country-side.
- (c) Sport and game preservation.
- (d) Lack of co-operation and credit facilities.
- (e) Insufficient knowledge of scientific methods.
- (f) Wrong idea that dairy-farming must be carried on on grass farms.
- (g) Farms too large.

All of these apply equally well to present-day conditions, but more will have to be said later about the possibilities of the soil in this country.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *English Farming, Past and Present*, R. E. Prothero, p. 401.

<sup>2</sup> "That our cultivated land is not made the most of is too true."—James Long, in *Making the Most of the Land* (1913), p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> P. 155.

<sup>4</sup> *The Land*, pp. 251–4

<sup>5</sup> Pars. 25–30.

### 7. *The drain from the country-side continues—reasons.*

In spite of the vast unpeopling of the country-side during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the movement was still continuing in the twentieth century. From Census figures we find that in 1891 the rural population formed 28 % of the total population, in 1901 23 %, and in 1911 only 21·9 %. Many of those who left the country-side went overseas, and the emigration figures for this period are alarming. In 1900 some 9,000 male agriculturists (mostly labourers) left for non-European countries. This number rose each year, until in 1907 26,000 left these shores. In 1908 the number fell to 15,000, but rose again to 23,000 in 1912.<sup>1</sup>

The number of agricultural labourers fell from 756,557 in 1891 to 609,105 in 1901. The figure 643,117 for 1911 shows an increase, but when we take into consideration the facts that many labourers were absent owing to the South African War in 1901, and that a different and more accurate method of classification was adopted in 1911, this increase dwindles considerably.

The Land Report attributes the continued drain from the country-side to low wages, long hours, shortage of cottages, and lack of outlook and prospects for the future, and to these we must add the laying down of arable to pasture and the consolidation of farms.

### 8. *Great shortage of cottages and bad condition of existing cottages—results.*

There is abundant evidence in the Report testifying to the great shortage of cottages, and this, coupled with the inability to obtain land, made it impossible for young labourers who wished to marry to remain in the villages. In large numbers of villages it would be difficult to find anyone who could remember the building of a labourer's cottage, and the Report states that in approximately 50 % of the villages of this country no new cottages had been built within the previous ten years. "In the course of our inquiry 2,759 parishes in England and Wales have been investigated. In 1,396 of these a shortage of cottages is reported, quite apart from the replacement

<sup>1</sup> *The Land*, p. 31.

of existing insanitary cottages.”<sup>1</sup> The estimated number required is put at 120,000.

The Select Committee on the Housing of the Working Classes Acts Amendment Bill, 1906, reported: “The Committee have had abundant evidence before them as to the insufficiency of cottages in rural districts. Cases have been brought to their notice in which people have had to leave a village because of the lack of housing accommodation.”

The evidence as to insanitary and broken-down leaky cottages comes from all over the country, and is indeed testified to by all writers on agricultural questions. Medical Officers of Health everywhere deplore the damp, dark cottages in which so many labourers are compelled to live, and the overcrowding is often said to be worse than in town slums.

A Sussex farmer’s evidence resembles that obtained from every county: “More men are driven off the land into towns through lack of cottage accommodation than for any other reason. Hundreds of the cottages are not fit for habitation. I have farmed for twenty to thirty years, and I am convinced that this is a crying need. Over and over again my young men when getting married have had to leave and go to the towns for want of accommodation.”<sup>2</sup>

9. *Labourer’s wage insufficient to pay economic rent. The insecurity of the “tied cottage.”*

The real cause, however, of the migration to the towns is not so much the shortage of cottages as the fact that the labourer is a landless serf, without the wage, or the possibility of obtaining the wage, necessary to pay an economic rent for a cottage. If the labourer had access to land and the possibility of earning or making an economic wage, the cottages would be built. An extract from the Report of the Select Committee on Housing, 1906, seems to show that this was appreciated: “One main reason is the difficulty of building cottages to yield an adequate interest on the outlay to the owner. Cottages, without adjacent land,<sup>3</sup> cannot be built in agricultural districts to secure a return to cover interest and

<sup>1</sup> P. 58.

<sup>2</sup> P. 85. Shortage of cottages causes loss of efficiency when labourers have to walk long distances to their work.

<sup>3</sup> The obtaining of this “adjacent land” would be a great difficulty.

sinking fund, in addition to the other usual outgoings, if let at the prevailing rents paid by farm labourers." <sup>1</sup>

The "tied cottage" system also contributes to the rural exodus, for many will not put up with the insecurity of tenure,<sup>2</sup> where the farmer, in dismissing the labourer from employment, can at the same time turn him into the street homeless. This system renders the labourer and his wife and children complete serfs, for the wife is often compelled to do work on the farm for fear of offending the farmer. Sir Rider Haggard in *Rural England* <sup>3</sup> quotes a correspondent as saying: "You may depend upon it, men are not going to be tied in cottages and be ruled by the iron hand of employers. Create hope in the people and provide for its realization. Oh! the hopelessness of village life! No wonder people flee from it, as from the haunted castle of Giant Despair."

# 10. *Low and falling wages cause rural depopulation.*

Low wages have already been referred to as conducing to rural depopulation. In 1913 more than half the agricultural workers in England received *total earnings* of less than 18s. per week, and of these 20,000 to 30,000 received less than 16s. In Oxfordshire the average *total* was about 15s. per week, and in South Warwickshire *total earnings* in many cases did not amount to more than from 13s. to 14s. per week; and from these sums there would be deductions for loss of time through wet and frost, while very few of the workers received a weekly half-holiday. A labourer's wife is reported as saying: "During the past fifteen weeks I have only been able to buy 2s. worth of meat, and I have now very nearly forgotten what it is like." <sup>4</sup> Another wife, quoted by Rowntree and Kendall in *How the Labourer Lives*, said: "I haven't bought meat or bacon for weeks and weeks."

On the question of wages the Inquiry Committee arrived

<sup>1</sup> P. xii.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. George Edwards, Sec. Agric. Labs. Union: "There are villages where the Union has never been able to gain a footing simply because 95 per cent of the cottages were tied, and if the men joined the Union they would go" (quoted in *The Land*, p. 146).

<sup>3</sup> Vol. i, p. 49. At p. 283 of the same volume, in referring to the "tied cottage," Mr. Thomas Hardy is quoted as saying: "The prime cause of the removal is unquestionably insecurity of tenure."

<sup>4</sup> *The Land*, p. 28.

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at the conclusion that, "when the increased cost of living has been taken into account, the real earnings of nearly 60 % of the ordinary agricultural labourers have actually decreased since 1907." <sup>1</sup>

### 11. *Consolidation and conversion continue, and result in depopulation.*

The consolidation and conversion of farms continued to account for the depopulation of the country-side, and the Land Report furnishes widespread evidence of these movements. The large farms deteriorate and are labour-starved, and when farms are thrown together a large portion is usually put down to grass. Two extracts from the evidence on this question may be given. An Essex overseer reports : <sup>2</sup> "Where farms have been consolidated, fewer labourers and tradesmen are required ; less intensive cultivation is adopted ; less interest is taken in the farm ; and less poultry, live-stock and bees are kept ; lack of attention to details, and the profitable working up and marketing of odds and ends of produce, the keeping down of vermin, and the growing of fruit."

A Buckinghamshire farmer states : <sup>3</sup> "The tendency of one occupier to get possession of several farms is the great evil of this district. It reduces the number of labourers about 50 %, places an abnormal local power in the hands of one man, and embitters the feeling of small men who are unable to get land. A great portion of the land is allowed to fall down to grass, and the remainder does not receive the cultivation it should, and thereby the production is decreased."

### 12. *Arable and pasture compared.*

Foreign competition seems always to have been met in this country by putting down arable land to pasture, what a Lincolnshire landowner aptly described as "reducing the cost of cultivation" as distinct from reducing the cost of production ; and he drew attention to the fact that on the Continent competition was usually met by *increasing the yield per acre* and seeing that the "in-put" was economic. In this connection we might refer to Denmark, where 90 % of the land is

<sup>1</sup> P. 12.

<sup>2</sup> P. 197.

<sup>3</sup> P. 197.



under arable cultivation, and yet she was in 1914, and is still, our chief rival in dairying.

The Report quotes an example of a comparison between arable and pasture land from the presidential address to the Surveyors' Institute, 1912, of the Hon. E. G. Strutt. The accounts are of two farms in the east of England of about 2,000 acres in which he had been interested for the past eighteen years. During the first twelve years the net profit from the arable land was £1 14s. 3d. per acre and from the grass-land 8s. 7d. ; and " during the last six years, with the prices of all agricultural produce increased, results from the arable land were £2 14s. 9d. per acre, and from the grass-land 6s. 6d." <sup>1</sup>

**13. *Vast areas of waste and rough pasture which could be improved—afforestation.***

Referring to waste land, the Report states : " There is much land lying waste at the present time which might profitably be cultivated. Sometimes it is not reclaimed, owing to the fact that the owner does not see sufficient prospect of getting a return on the capital he expends in reclamation. In such cases the land can often only be reclaimed by the State. There is also, however, much waste land which could well be brought into cultivation by private individuals, and the evidence shows that this has often been done. Some moorland has already been reclaimed by tenants who practically have security of tenure, and there is little doubt that this would happen more frequently if greater security of tenure were given." <sup>2</sup> Professor Long quotes the case of a Mr. Passmore, a farmer on the South Downs, who enormously improved the herbage on his farm with dressings of basic slag, and he states : " There is practically no class of land in this country which we may regard as unimprovable. To the occupier of hill and down land, of heath and peat, improvement seems impossible ; but it is not so." <sup>3</sup> He also refers to " the many millions of acres of rough grazing land which potentially represent the wealth of a new nation." <sup>4</sup>

The Royal Commission on Coast Erosion and Afforestation,<sup>5</sup> 1909, arrived at the conclusion that in England and

<sup>1</sup> P. 53.

<sup>2</sup> P. 252.

<sup>3</sup> Long, p. 157.

<sup>4</sup> Long, p. ix (Introduction).

<sup>5</sup> Cd. 4460, vol. ii, pt. i, p. 32.

Wales there would be quite 1,500,000 acres of land fit for afforestation, and that another million acres might be added to this, consisting of poor tillage land that would pay better under forests. The possibilities of afforestation, however, will be further discussed in the next chapter.

**14. *Increase of game and gamekeepers diminishes employment and production.***

The vast preserves of game in England call forth the condemnation of the Land Report, both on account of the amount of land so withheld from use and the great damage to crops. There was considerable evidence before the Royal Commission of 1897 as to the destruction caused by ground game, and much evidence was before the Inquiry Committee to the effect that small tenants, and especially labourers cultivating allotments, were often afraid of taking advantage of the provisions of the Ground Game Act, 1906, and that the restrictions on the methods of killing rendered the Act less useful. The increase in the number of gamekeepers in this country since 1851 is significant. The figures are as follows :

1851 .. .. .	9,000
1881 .. .. .	12,633
1901 .. .. .	16,677
1911 .. .. .	17,148

A report furnished to the Inquiry Committee by an assistant overseer from Norfolk contains statements which, from other returns made, appear to apply widely : "The damage is so great in many places that corn cannot be grown, as the seed is taken from the land by the large number of winged game, while the ground game, which the tenant under his lease agrees not to kill, destroy the corn when more matured. The tenant knows that he cannot legally contract out of his right to kill ground game, but he also knows that his tenancy would be terminated if he shot a hare. On the other hand, he knows, as he is informed by the owner, that he hires the land cheaper for this cause. The owners in this district also claim and exercise the right to stop the occupier from keeping fowls in the fields, as the fowls eat material required by pheasants and partridges." <sup>1</sup> Commenting on the evidence, the Land Report

states : " Further, as already shown, there is evidence that not merely is land under-cultivated, but large areas are altogether out of cultivation owing to the preservation of game. This land, instead of providing food for the people, provides sport and delicacies for the few, and is the source of much damage and annoyance to neighbouring farmers." <sup>1</sup>

It is thus quite clear that game preservation, by restricting the opportunities for employment and otherwise diminishing production, is a cause of unemployment.

*15. Conversion and depopulation still continue. Arable area steadily decreasing.*

We have already seen that depopulation and unemployment result from the conversion of arable land to pasture, but this devastating movement has continued through the twentieth century and is still continuing. From 1901 to 1912 a further 942,000 acres of arable were laid down to grass, making a decrease in arable in thirty years of nearly 3,000,000 acres. This area under the plough, under prevailing conditions, would employ 100,000 labourers. It is important to note the movements in the areas of arable and permanent pasture since 1912 : <sup>2</sup>

Year.				Arable.	Permanent Grass.
1912	..	..	..	11,335,000	15,839,000
1913	..	..	..	11,058,000	16,071,000
1914	..	..	..	10,998,000	16,116,000
1915	..	..	..	10,966,000	16,087,000
1916	..	..	..	11,051,000	16,023,000
1917	..	..	..	11,246,000	15,835,000
1918	..	..	..	12,399,000	14,589,000
1919	..	..	..	12,309,000	14,439,000
1920	..	..	..	12,020,000	14,487,000
1921	..	..	..	11,618,000	14,526,000
1922	..	..	..	11,311,000	14,715,000
1923	..	..	..	11,182,000	14,759,000
1924	..	..	..	10,929,000	14,948,000

It will be seen from these figures that arable land decreased in area from 1912 to 1915, when the movement was arrested by war conditions. By 1918 1,400,746 acres more were under

<sup>1</sup> P. 278.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics are taken from the Annual Returns of the Ministry of Agriculture.

arable cultivation than in 1914; but the war over, the old movement of conversion to pasture was resumed to such an extent that in 1924 the area of land returned to arable is actually 406,000 acres less than it was in 1912, and is the lowest yet recorded.

Although it appears from these figures that the area under permanent grass has diminished considerably, this is by no means certain; but if it were so, it would mean that the *total area* under cultivation was diminishing. There are, however, other figures which must be considered in conjunction with those for permanent grass—namely, the area of mountain and heath land actually used for rough grazing. The areas for land in this category are as follows :

Year.					Rough Grazing (Mountain and Heath).
1914	..	..	..	..	3,781,565
1915	..	..	..	..	3,764,706
1916	..	..	..	..	3,816,083
1917	..	..	..	..	3,901,713
1918	..	..	..	..	3,987,246
1919	..	..	..	..	4,121,454
1920	..	..	..	..	4,162,271
1921	..	..	..	..	4,731,837
1922	..	..	..	..	4,781,476
1923	..	..	..	..	4,859,476
1924	..	..	..	..	4,946,338

If we take the totals for permanent grass and rough grazings for 1914 and 1923 the decrease will be found to be 278,839 acres.

Year.					Permanent Grass and Rough Grazings.
1914	..	..	..	..	19,897,315
1923	..	..	..	..	19,618,476 <sup>1</sup>

The Ministry of Agriculture comment on this fact in Agricultural Statistics for 1921: "The disquieting feature of the returns, however, is that the loss of this land which is being withdrawn from arable cultivation is not being made good by a corresponding increase in the area under permanent pasture. For many years, from 1871 to 1916, there was a more or less continuous decrease of ploughed land, but this was to a very large extent *compensated for by an increase in permanent*

<sup>1</sup> The 1924 figures show an increase in permanent grass.

*pasture*—there was, in fact, evidence of a turnover from one category to another. Since 1918, on the other hand, notwithstanding the great decrease in arable cultivation, the movement in permanent pasture has been insignificant.”<sup>1</sup>

No doubt a part of the actual decrease in permanent grass is due to the withdrawal of land for building purposes, and the explanation given in the Ministry's Report, 1922, probably accounts for the greater part of the remainder. They say : “ It is clear that a somewhat fuller definition of the class of land which should be classified as rough grazings and the use of rather more prominent type in the schedule since 1919 has led occupiers to return under the head of rough grazings some land which they had previously returned as permanent grass. In many of the returns examined the increase in the area of rough grazings was exactly the same as the reduction in the area of permanent grass.”<sup>2</sup> But even when we take all these facts into consideration, there is a suspicion that some land at any rate has gone out of use altogether.

**16. Wheat area now below pre-war level. Earlier figures compared.**

The acreage under wheat in 1914 had fallen to 1,807,498 acres, and in spite of increases during the war, it was only 1,741,000 acres in 1923 and 1,545,000 acres in 1924. In 1914 the acreage under turnips and swedes had declined by one-third in the previous thirty years, and the acreage under root crops in 1923 is below that of 1914. The bare fallow recorded in 1914 was 340,737 acres, and in 1923 it was 435,300 acres.<sup>3</sup>

The statistics for cattle, sheep and pigs are as follows :

Year.			Cattle.	Sheep.	Pigs.
1914	..	..	5,877,944	17,259,694	2,481,481
1923	..	..	5,822,100	13,831,000	2,611,400
1924	..	..	5,894,329	14,843,195	3,328,330
(1696)	..	..	—	11,000,000	2,000,000

<sup>1</sup> Agricultural Statistics, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> P. 7 of the Report.

<sup>3</sup> In 1924 it had fallen to 355,599 acres.

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## 17. County Statistics.

The following statistics of some English agricultural counties and the Channel Islands throw considerable light on present-day conditions of the country-side, and furnish instructive comparisons with earlier times :

			1914.	1923.	1924.
<i>Bedfordshire</i> (301,829 acres)					
Arable	..	..	144,600 acres	147,908 acres	144,870 acres
Permanent Grass	..	..	110,148 „	109,272 „	109,992 „
Cattle	..	..	35,626	38,107	39,412
Sheep	..	..	65,574	43,957	47,150
Pigs	..	..	28,257	26,691	36,006
<i>Berkshire</i> (460,730 acres)					
Arable	..	..	174,528 acres	170,098 acres	164,228 acres
Permanent Grass	..	..	174,277 „	185,456 „	189,243 „
Cattle	..	..	51,257	54,306	56,375
Sheep	..	..	121,256	74,772	76,777
Pigs	..	..	20,459	23,750	31,281
<i>Dorsetshire</i> (624,031 acres)					
Arable	..	..	161,455 acres	157,242 acres	152,159 acres
Permanent Grass	..	..	315,847 „	336,025 „	340,060 „
Cattle	..	..	98,207	100,494	103,437
Sheep	..	..	291,867	196,971	202,801
Pigs	..	..	52,692	44,153	55,522
<i>Essex</i> (976,125 acres)					
Arable	..	..	506,593 acres	498,365 acres	488,493 acres
Permanent Grass	..	..	284,610 „	279,169 „	286,079 „
Cattle	..	..	96,555	96,883	96,336
Sheep	..	..	172,352	108,931	113,578
Pigs	..	..	81,570	96,100	126,565
<i>Norfolk</i> (1,308,156 acres)					
Arable	..	..	776,883 acres	773,863 acres	764,661 acres
Permanent Grass	..	..	289,310 „	309,328 „	315,468 „
Cattle	..	..	131,906	133,792	124,285
Sheep	..	..	365,899	262,032	277,537
Pigs	..	..	116,092	153,483	196,493

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			1914.		1923.		1924.
<i>Sussex</i> (928,735 acres)							
Arable	..	..	227,102	acres	227,821	acres	217,916 acres
Permanent Grass	..	..	424,014	„	439,552	„	447,176 „
Cattle	..	..	127,327		134,845		133,111
Sheep	..	..	368,679		234,746		249,257
Pigs	..	..	41,379		53,114		67,615

					1914.		1922.
<i>Jersey</i> (28,717 acres)							
Arable	..	..	..	..	16,118	acres	15,941 acres
Permanent Grass	..	..	..	..	3,569	„	4,623 „
Cattle	..	..	..	..	12,123		10,070
Sheep	..	..	..	..	114		47
Pigs	..	..	..	..	5,106		3,049

<i>Guernsey, etc.</i> (15,750 acres)							
Arable	..	..	..	..	5,374	acres	4,714 acres
Permanent Grass	..	..	..	..	6,242	„	7,305 „
Cattle	..	..	..	..	6,300		6,174
Sheep	..	..	..	..	322		132
Pigs	..	..	..	..	3,668		1,911

## 18. *Census of 1921. Decline in rural population.*

The 1921 Census results show a further proportional decline in the rural population, and in many instances an absolute decline over the 1911 figures. The total population of England and Wales was returned as 37,885,242. There were 1,126 *Urban Districts*<sup>1</sup> with 30,034,385 persons, and 672 *Rural Districts* with 7,850,857 persons. The percentage decline in rural population may be shown as follows :

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION.					
				Urban.	Rural.
1891	..	..	..	72	28
1901	..	..	..	77	23
1911	..	..	..	78·1	21·9
1921	..	..	..	79·3	20·7

<sup>1</sup> The Administrative County of London is counted as one district.

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In several counties there is an absolute decline in the rural population, shown as follows :

County.	1921 Population.	Rural Population, 1911.	Rural Population, 1921.
Cambridgeshire..	129,594	72,510	70,332
Norfolk .. ..	322,914	260,836	257,931
Northamptonshire	211,507	118,237	115,510
Suffolk :			
East .. ..	211,623	122,270	120,508
West .. ..	108,982	73,050	67,677
Isle of Wight ..	94,697	31,059	30,925
Oxfordshire ..	189,558	100,119	97,168

### 19. *Productivity of the war-time allotments. The minimum wage.*

As has been shown, there was an increase of arable land during the war, and during the latter part of the war period large numbers of allotments were made available, and the food supply was enormously increased. Unfortunately many of these allotments have had to be given up since the war, and arable land is again lapsing to pasture, a further extensive conversion being threatened as a result of a recent fall in prices. It has been estimated that there were some one and a half million of these allotments, covering 180,000 acres,<sup>1</sup> or approximately  $\frac{1}{8}$  acre to each allotment, and that the annual value of the food produced amounted to £40,000,000.<sup>2</sup> The productive power and value of these small allotments will be realized when it is seen that the food production equals £222 per acre,<sup>3</sup> but it should also be borne in mind that the Government had to exert its powers to make the necessary land available.

The farmers endeavoured to meet the war shortage of labour by the cheap labour of boys still at school, and in spite of a great rise in prices, wages, as usual, were very slow

<sup>1</sup> Agricultural Statistics for 1924 estimate that at the end of 1923 there were in England and Wales 1,190,000 allotments, covering an area of 170,000 acres, a decrease of just over 10 % as compared with the 1920 total.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Leverhulme, speaking at the Guildhall in September, 1922.

<sup>3</sup> One and a half million acres worked in this way would produce food to the value of £333,000,000.



in following. The author of *The English Agricultural Labourer*<sup>1</sup> met able-bodied men in the Isle of Purbeck in September 1916 receiving 13s. and 14s. a week, and the wage in Norfolk at this time, including harvest earnings, was £1 3s. 1½d., although the cost of living was up 65 %, and at the end of 1916 wheat was 75s. 10d. and barley 67s. 5d. In January 1917 wages had risen by 42 % and the cost of living by 87 %, and the labourers were thus worse off than they were in 1914. In August 1917 however, the Corn Production Act fixed a minimum wage of 25s. for agricultural workers,<sup>2</sup> and Trade Boards were empowered to fix a local minimum in different districts. Now for a time the labourer began to enjoy better times, but his prosperity was short-lived. In 1921, owing to a fall in prices and the outcry of the farmers, the minimum was abolished and the Trade Board ceased to function.<sup>3</sup> The labourer is now probably worse off than in 1914.

**20. Great land sales during period of high prices. No farms to let.**

As in former periods of high prices, landlords and farmers have done well, and many fortunes have been made. Farmers were encouraged to buy their land at boom prices, and, in fact, often had to buy in order to retain possession, and nowhere was there any land available for renting. Messrs. Knight, Frank & Rutley, estate agents, in their brochure, *The Land Question*, published in 1922, state that between 1913 and 1922 in Great Britain they have disposed of 2,365,000 acres of land, amounting in value to £31,231,052. This affords some indication of the vast area which must have changed hands in the last ten years. Now, with the fall in prices in 1922 and 1923, many of those who bought at the top of the market have been ruined, and again there is a so-called "depression" in agriculture. Referring to recent conditions, it is stated in *The Land Question* that, "in spite of critical conditions,

<sup>1</sup> F. E. Green, a member of the Royal Commission on Agriculture.

<sup>2</sup> Wheat then stood at 78s. 7d.

<sup>3</sup> The part of the Agriculture Act of 1920 dealing with the Board was repealed in July 1921. "As soon as the Government saw that the bargain was about to become operative, they tore up the scrap of paper on which it was written" (Lord Ernle).

there are practically no farms to let at present. Farmers who from various causes have had to relinquish their farms and have no training or inclination for any other calling are thus still constrained to buy, and this fact has its bearing on prices.”<sup>1</sup>

## 21. *The Government Land Settlement Scheme. Councils compete for land.*

After the war many thousands of ex-soldiers, who had grown accustomed to an open-air life, wished to take up small holdings and settle on the land, and the hope that this would be possible had been encouraged by many Government promises. In 1919 a Land Settlement (Facilities) Act was passed, making many alterations in existing small-holding legislation, and empowering County and County Borough Councils to acquire land for holdings. The Councils were not to be restricted to the acquisition of land which could be let as small holdings at a rent sufficient to cover loan charges and other outgoings, and the Ministry of Agriculture was to guarantee the Councils against loss up to 1926.

The Councils were thus entering the market to purchase when the prices of land, building material, and equipment were abnormally high, and the competition was so great that land could only be acquired by purchase. The position at this time is well stated by Messrs. Knight, Frank & Rutley : “During the period of the greatest activity in land sales competition was often keen, and high prices were realized, based as a rule on the fair market rental value<sup>2</sup> at the time of the sale and not on the actual rent payable. A sitting tenant, in order to secure his holding, had sometimes undoubtedly to give a high price.<sup>3</sup> County Councils have been powerful competitors. Successful business men and ex-officers, attracted by country pursuits, have also been purchasers, especially of the smaller farms.”<sup>4</sup>

## 22. *Extent and cost of the scheme.*

Some idea of the difficulty of obtaining the necessary land, and the costliness and small results of the scheme, may be

<sup>1</sup> P. 9.

<sup>2</sup> I.e. monopoly value.

<sup>3</sup> On p. 11 the authors state that the increase which a tenant who buys has to pay annually is from 23 to 136 %.

<sup>4</sup> P. 8.

gauged from the statistics provided at various intervals during the last three years. From a Ministry of Agriculture statement, issued in January 1922, it appears that up to December 1921 there were 47,943 applications in England and Wales, the amount of land asked for being 826,540 acres. Of these applications, 11,104 had been rejected, and 11,503 provided with 163,778 acres. A further 15,847 applications from ex-service men *had been approved*, but *land had not yet been provided*.

In March <sup>1</sup> 1922 the Marquis of Lincolnshire, speaking in the House of Lords, said that 14,297 men had been settled, and that 21,000 applicants were not yet provided for. Speaking in the House on the same day, Lord Ernle said that the Government had settled 15,000 men, and *it had cost* £15,000,000. The Geddes Report stated that the average annual loss on 260,000 acres was estimated at £2 per acre—i.e. £500,000—and that the cost of the headquarters establishment was £75,000. There had also been heavy losses on various Government Settlements.

A Ministry of Agriculture Report <sup>2</sup> on this scheme was issued in April 1923, and this shows that up to January 1923 only 18,960 men had been settled on 268,407 acres. Something of the delay in providing the holdings can be gathered from the fact that “of the 18,960 men settled, about 11,000 have taken occupation of their holdings since harvest of 1920.”

### 23. *Comparative failure due to delay, high prices, lack of co-operation.*

Besides those who applied and failed to obtain holdings, large numbers, of whom the writer met many,<sup>3</sup> did not apply because they saw the delay in the case of others, and realized the remote chance of ever obtaining a holding. Also many of those who had had sufficient capital to start a holding had long since exhausted this on living by the time the holding was allotted. Rents were high owing to the high price of land and the cost of building, and these entailed a heavy burden of rates. Co-operation would have helped to make the scheme a success, but unfortunately the first thought of so many

<sup>1</sup> March 9th.

<sup>2</sup> “Report on the Present Position and Future Prospects of Ex-Service Men settled on the Land in England and Wales.”

<sup>3</sup> During service as a Government official.

prospective small holders was, and is still, that the first thing they must buy, however small the holding, is a horse and cart.

As it is, however, the complete failures to January 1923 only appear to be 6·5 %, or 1,226, but the Report adds that "if the 1923 season proves as bad as either 1921 or 1922, and agricultural prices continue as unremunerative, the number of failures is certain to show a serious increase." With reference to the "depression" the Report states: "The agricultural depression has unquestionably affected ex-Service small-holders no less than other farmers. Few, if any, have succeeded in getting through their first two or three years on the land without losing money. . . . Taking the country as a whole, nearly 20 % of the aggregate half-years' rent-roll on the post-war estate was remitted at Michaelmas 1922."

But in spite of all this, it is stated that the demand for holdings is almost as keen as ever.

#### 24. *Mixed holdings the most successful.*

The Report gives details of the progress made by these ex-Service small holders in various parts of the country. In the east the fall in the price of corn and potatoes had hit the tenants hard, but those who kept some stock were pulling through.<sup>1</sup> Mixed holdings were more general in the Midlands, and there was little wastage, and this also applies to the south of England generally and to Wales. In the south-east the small holders are largely settled in big estates, a circumstance which should facilitate co-operative methods; but, according to the Report, "at present there is little, if any, evidence of a tendency in this direction." Between 1918 and 1923 the failures in this part of the country amounted to 15 %.

Everywhere high rents and rates are complained of, and in some of the industrial districts of Wales rates are said to equal the rents.

#### 25. *Can this country feed itself? The case of wheat—some comparisons. Scientific discoveries and production per acre.*

It is frequently stated by agriculturists and others that it is quite impossible to grow sufficient foodstuffs in this

<sup>1</sup> Cf. par. 5.

country for the present population, or, what amounts to the same thing, that the country is over-populated, and must depend to an increasing extent on foreign food supplies. Let us see by taking a few examples whether the opportunities for producing food in this country have been exhausted, or whether it is that those who have taken the place of the dispossessed peasant on the land have failed to make use of the opportunities at their disposal.

We will start with the case of wheat. In 1924 the acreage under wheat was 1,545,000 acres, which at an average of 31 bushels to the acre gives 47,895,000 bushels. The total annual consumption is approximately 240,000,000 bushels,<sup>1</sup> so that at 31 bushels to the acre, this would require a little over 7,700,000 acres. But 31 bushels to the acre is not a great deal above the average of fifty years ago.<sup>2</sup> Since that time there have been many discoveries in agricultural science which would enable a much greater amount to be produced, but unfortunately these discoveries have not been adopted. Denmark, with a soil very much poorer than that of England, produces on an average some 44 bushels of wheat to the acre, and in 1921, when England produced 35·4 bushels, Denmark produced 51 bushels. So that if the English average per acre were raised to the Danish level, we could grow all the wheat we required on less than 5,500,000 acres.

But, having regard to the results obtained by scientific agriculturists,<sup>3</sup> and on the best farms in this country, there seems to be little doubt that the average could be easily doubled and the necessary wheat grown on less than 4,000,000 acres by only adopting a few of the discoveries of recent years. All Government Reports on Agriculture, referring to production generally, state that in many cases the produce per acre might be doubled. Sir Rider Haggard, when touring England, speaks of several farms where the wheat crops

<sup>1</sup> Long gives the amount of wheat required as 6 bushels per person.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Caird in the *Statistical Journal*, 1868, p. 130, estimates average production per acre at 28 bushels. (Quoted by Porter, *The Progress of the Nation*, p. 198.)

<sup>3</sup> A land agent writing in the *Daily Telegraph*, January 20, 1922, says: "Within the last few years certain pioneers have evolved theories which, if brought into general practice, would more than double our food production." He then gives an example of wheat-growing in Essex, where by shallow sowing 114 stems and nearly 3,000 kernels were produced from one grain.

reached 50 and 57 bushels to the acre, and Professor Long refers to skilled farmers who habitually grow 50 to 80 bushels. He instances Lord Rosebery's farm, where "in 1911, a year of almost unparalleled drought, Lord Rosebery produced 80 bushels of wheat to the acre," and he adds, "there is no reason why this figure should not be frequently reached."<sup>1</sup>

Even thirty to forty years ago as much as 70 to 90 bushels to the acre were obtained by planting out seed and growing wheat more as a vegetable,<sup>2</sup> and with such wheat, yielding 600 grains on the average, about  $\frac{1}{1\frac{1}{2}}$  acre would be required to grow the annual wheat for one person. Recent experiments with electricity show that the wheat yield might be enormously increased with its help at a very small expense.<sup>3</sup>

**26. *Persons per square mile fed on home-grown produce in Great Britain and other countries.***

In Great Britain nearly 3 acres of the cultivable area are required to grow the food for *one* person, or, in other words, home-grown food supplies 125 or 135 persons out of 466 per square mile. France produces food for 170 out of 188 per square mile, and Belgium supplies nearly all the food for a population which is only a little under 600 to the square mile. Between 1880 and 1885 Belgium produced home-grown food for 490 *persons* per square mile, and in addition exported £1,000,000 worth of agricultural produce to Great Britain every year. Immediately before the war Belgium grew some two-thirds of the necessary cereals for its population and a far greater quantity of other foodstuffs. In 1910 this densely populated little country was *exporting agricultural produce* to the value then of 48s. *per head* of population, and at the same time was exporting home-manufactured goods to the value of 198s. *per head* and half-manufactured goods to the value of 150s. *per head*, while the *total exports from the United Kingdom* in the boom year of 1911 only amounted to 201s. *per head* of population.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Long, *Making the Most of the Land*, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> See Kropotkin, *Fields, Factories and Workshops*.

<sup>3</sup> It must be remembered that the cultivable area of England and Wales is over 27,000,000 acres.

<sup>4</sup> Figures from Kropotkin, pp. 115-16; see also Chapters III-V, 1912 edition.

27. *What Denmark can produce—cattle, poultry, dairy produce, pigs. Britain neglects her own market.*

In Denmark, with a poor soil, far below that of this country in fertility, some 90 % of the cultivated land is under the plough, and yet the Danes are our great rivals in dairying. In 1881 they kept 899,000 cows, and in 1914 1,310,000, meeting a fall in prices, not by allowing arable to tumble down to grass, but by *increasing* the arable area and by co-operative methods. Denmark owns one cow or heifer per 2·1 persons, while in this country the proportion is one per 16 persons.<sup>1</sup> The butter export from Denmark in the years 1881–5 averaged 15,630 tons, and in 1911–15 it was 99,420 tons. The number of fowls kept in 1893 amounted to 5,900,000, and in 1914 these had increased to 15,100,000.

The way in which this country has failed to supply its own huge market with pig-meat, and the manner in which Denmark has stepped into the breach,<sup>2</sup> afford some striking comparisons, and point to the possibilities of future development in this country.<sup>3</sup> The number of pigs in England and Wales in 1923<sup>4</sup> only exceeded by a few thousands the total of 2,586,000 in 1872, but during this period the imports of bacon rose from 2,000,000 cwt. to nearly 6,000,000 cwt., and the imports of hams, lard, and pork increased in a similar way. The present annual imports of pig products amount to nearly 10,500,000 cwt., of a value of almost £55,500,000. It will thus be seen that England has done practically nothing to serve the great market in her midst.

The pigs in Denmark have increased from some 500,000 in 1881 to about 2,500,000 at the present time, and over 2,100,000 are killed annually. Mr. W. A. Stewart, M.A., B.Sc.Agr., writing in the *Journal of the Ministry of Agriculture* for September 1923, says: "There is no reason why the whole of British requirements in pig products should not be produced within the British Isles." And to show how unenterprising

<sup>1</sup> Long, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Imports of butter, eggs, and bacon from Denmark in 1921 amounted to £37,000,000.

<sup>3</sup> "That the larger number of pigs kept in continental countries is chiefly owing to the system of small farming we cannot doubt. A Danish farmer owning 50 acres breeds a larger number of pigs than an average British farmer in occupation of 200 acres" (Long, p. 18).

<sup>4</sup> Figures from *Journal of the Ministry of Agriculture*, September, 1923.

the English farmer is, he adds : " Although it is true that there are many more good pigs in the country now than there were in 1914, the common pig is still more or less a mongrel, with little merit to recommend it, and there is great scope for general improvement. Mongrel-bred boars are still used for breeding, and this is altogether wrong."

**28.** *What the Channel Islands produce. Dense population and intensive culture beats Great Britain in crop averages.*

The Channel Islands afford some striking illustrations of what can be got out of the land by intensive culture and a land system which induces the holder to get the utmost out of his land. Jersey feeds a population of about two to each acre, or 1,300 to the square mile, and at the same time exports a large amount of agricultural produce, and this in spite of the fact that there are climatic drawbacks and the soil is of no special fertility.<sup>1</sup> All crops have much higher averages in these islands than in England. Potatoes average 10-12 tons per acre against 6 in this country ; barley 50 bushels against 33 here ; turnips and swedes 60 tons against 14 ; parsnips and carrots 25 tons against 14 ; and hay 50 cwt. against 23½ cwt.<sup>2</sup>

Kropotkin,<sup>3</sup> referring to potato-growing in Germany, says : " Extensive experiments have lately been made . . . and the crops were, 9 tons per acre for the poor sorts, 14 tons for the better ones, and 32½ tons for the best varieties of potatoes ; 3 tons to the acre and more than 30 tons to the acre are thus the ascertained limits, and one necessarily asks oneself : Which of the two requires *less labour* in tilling, planting, cultivating and digging, and less expenditure in manure, 30 tons on 10 acres, or the same 30 tons grown on 1 acre or 2 ? If labour is of no consideration, while every penny spent in seeds and manure is of great importance, as is unhappily very often the case with the peasant, he will perforce choose the first method. But is it the most economic ? " Professor Long refers to many farmers in this country who obtain yields of potatoes varying from 12 to 18 tons per acre.<sup>4</sup>

Kropotkin<sup>5</sup> also refers to Jersey and the Saffellare district

<sup>1</sup> Rider Haggard, *Rural England*, vol. i, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> Long, p. 118.

<sup>4</sup> Long, p. viii (Introduction).

<sup>3</sup> Kropotkin, p. 173.

<sup>5</sup> Kropotkin, p. 174.



of Flanders, where they keep one head of cattle to each acre of green crops, meadows and pasture, while elsewhere 2 or 3 acres are needed for each head of cattle.

29. *Kropotkin on the possibilities of agricultural production in the United Kingdom.*

From a survey of a few countries Kropotkin draws the following conclusions, which seem, if anything, to be an underestimate of the possibilities :

" 1. If the land of the United Kingdom were cultivated only as it *was* forty-five years ago, 24,000,000 people instead of 17,000,000 could live on home-grown food ; and this culture, while giving occupation to an additional 750,000 men, would give nearly 3,000,000 wealthy home customers to the British manufacturers.

" 2. If the cultivated area of the United Kingdom were cultivated as the soil is cultivated *on the average* in Belgium,<sup>1</sup> the United Kingdom would have food for at least 37,000,000 inhabitants ; and it might export agricultural produce without ceasing to manufacture, so as freely to supply all the needs of a wealthy population. And finally—

" 3. If the population of this country came to be doubled, all that would be required for producing the food for 90,000,000 inhabitants would be to cultivate the soil as it is cultivated in the best farms of this country, in Lombardy, and in Flanders, and to utilize some meadows which at present lie almost unproductive, in the same way as the neighbourhoods of the big cities in France are utilized for market-gardening. All these are not fancy dreams, but mere realities—nothing but the modest conclusions from what we see round about us, without any allusion to the agriculture of the future." <sup>2</sup>

There seems little doubt that with small farms, intensive culture and a development of co-operation,<sup>3</sup> and the adoption of only a few of the many scientific discoveries,<sup>4</sup> this country

<sup>1</sup> The average yield of meadow hay in England is 23·8 cwt., but there are individual yields of 50–60 cwt. Mangels average 20 tons per acre, but there are individual yields of 40–100 tons (Long).

<sup>2</sup> Kropotkin, p. 119.

<sup>3</sup> Long, pp. 33–4 : " One of the chief causes of the limited means of farmers is found in the almost entire absence of co-operation."

<sup>4</sup> Note the possibilities of the use of electricity and the value of French culture, enabling four or five successive crops to be grown in one season.

could support now a population enormously greater than it has, or is likely to have, for some time to come.

**30.** *Rider Haggard and productiveness of small holdings. The apathy of the farming class in adopting improvements.*

On the subject of small farms Sir Rider Haggard says : "Broadly, however, I may say that where the farms are large and corn is chiefly grown, there is little or no prosperity, while where they are small and assisted by pastures or fruit culture both owners and tenants are doing fairly well."<sup>1</sup> Professor Long frequently refers to farmers who have too much land and to the increased produce which small holders are able to get from their land ; and with regard to these small farms he says : "Success, indeed, can be commanded in no other way."<sup>2</sup>

As an example of how good land is often allowed to fall to waste in this country, we may take the case of Potton, in Huntingdonshire. Rider Haggard<sup>3</sup> refers to this district as a stronghold of small cultivators who send a large amount of produce to London. But within a short distance "thousands of acres are quite or very nearly derelict, and the farm-houses, buildings, and cottages are slowly rotting down. . . . All this land was cultivated and grew crops up to the eighties."

Professor Long deplores the fact that the farmers of Great Britain should be fed by the farmers of other countries, but has not much hope of the present farming class. He writes : "With the best will in the world to make full allowance for the difficulties under which so many tenants farm, it is impossible to ignore the fact that if an angel were to assure the unbelievers among them that, by adopting similar methods, they could obtain similar results, they would not make the attempts. We are speaking of those who regard experiments as the fads of the rich or as part of the routine of the agricultural college, of those who read and decline to take the pains to understand, or, lastly, of those who never read at all ; and we think we may regard these three sections of the tenant-farming class as forming a large proportion of the total number."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Rural England*, vol. ii, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Long, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. ii, p. 59.

<sup>4</sup> Long, p. 105.

**31. *Agricultural depression—country-side labour-starved, and Government without a remedy.***

Our country-side at the present day presents in most districts a dreary spectacle—a dwindling population,<sup>1</sup> half-starved and discontented labourers, poorly farmed lands and derelict houses. One may survey hundreds, and even thousands, of acres in many parts of England and scarcely be able to find a single worker in the fields. Farm buildings often more nearly resemble heaps of ruins than anything else, and the many miserable crops and wasted fields are heart-breaking. In 1918 and 1919 the agricultural labourer experienced better times, but now he is back again in his old position. But since 1914 the labourer has had his eyes opened to many things. He knows of the large profits made by farmers during the war, and he sees farms selling for high prices in spite of "depression," but he himself has been unable to rent a piece of land for any money. And with the country-side in this derelict state the Government is spending £3,000,000 per annum for fifteen years to assist emigration,<sup>2</sup> apparently because it considers that there are no further opportunities for employment in this country.

Once more, in 1922 and 1923, prices have fallen, with the result that there is again the cry of agricultural distress. The labourers' wages are to be further reduced, and the farmers threaten to lay down more arable land to pasture<sup>3</sup> unless the Government grants them protection or subsidies. We have seen from the Agricultural Statistics that this threat is being carried into effect, for the arable area in 1924 was 381,000 acres less than in 1922.

**32. *The beggars again come to town—extent of post-war unemployment.***

So far we have only been dealing with one side of the picture, but there is another. Since the year 1920 the beggars

<sup>1</sup> Agricultural Statistics, 1923: Since 1921 number of regular agricultural workers has declined by 8·7 %, and taking male workers alone by 7·5 %. Agricultural Statistics 1924 show 34,000 more workers employed than in 1923, but 63,000 less than in 1921.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the state of England after Waterloo.

<sup>3</sup> Messrs. Knight, Frank & Rutley are under no delusions as to what will be the result of this. If present conditions continue, they say, "land will continue to go down to grass at an increasingly rapid rate, unemployment and depopulation in rural areas will follow, and the total of food production will decline" (*The Land Question*, p. 21).

have come to town in numbers greater than ever before. Tramps wander about the country-side, and our towns and cities are filled with beggars. Many of the great industrial cities of this country during the last three years have presented a devastated appearance owing to lack of trade and consequent unemployment, and to find parallel descriptions we must go back to 1844.

More reliable figures are obtainable at the present day as to the number of unemployed. Some 12,000,000 workers are registered under the Unemployed Insurance Acts,<sup>1</sup> but no figures show the actual total, although the Government figures are sufficiently alarming. From 600,000 in 1920 the total reached 2,000,000 in 1921. Throughout 1922 it never fell below 1,414,000, the average being about 1,580,000, and the average for 1923 was only a little below this. It has been computed that, from 1919 to the middle of 1923, the central and local governments have expended some £400,000,000 on unemployment relief.

**33.** *Official figures do not disclose full extent of the evil.*  
*Value of allotments to unemployed.*

With reference to these figures, the Report entitled "The Third Winter of Unemployment" states: "The general average conceals the intensity of the depression in the worst trades. One man in 8 is the unemployed proportion in industry generally; in shipbuilding it is more than one in 3; in engineering almost one in 4; in iron and steel, cutlery and tool over one in 4; in constructional industry, brass and copper, linen and hemp, and the docks one in 5."<sup>2</sup> In estimating the extent of unemployment it is necessary to take into account short-time work, and the Report considers that this is half as considerable as total unemployment.<sup>3</sup> The Report states: "In other words, in industry proper the insufficiency of employment is not the 11·9 of the insurance returns, but something between 20 and 20½ %; nearly 14 %

<sup>1</sup> Agricultural workers, domestic servants, and employees of local authorities are not included. The total number of employed adults amounts to about 16,000,000.

<sup>2</sup> P. 4 of the Report.

<sup>3</sup> It is estimated in this Report that 1,500,000 unemployed would have 2,580,000 dependents, making in all 4,080,000 persons.

of the workers are totally unemployed, while the time lost by those who are in employment, if concentrated instead of being spread out, would add another 7 to 9 % to the totally unemployed. A fifth or more of the industrial power of the country is running to waste."

Testimony is given in the Report to the value of allotments to the unemployed in Sheffield.<sup>1</sup> "One of the most valuable assets to the unemployed has been allotments, and there is no doubt that these are having a decidedly beneficial effect in keeping large numbers of men off the streets. In Sheffield there are no less than 11,000 allotments, and those who are in a position to judge estimate that about 4,000 of the holders are at present out of employment. The ordinary sized allotment, if properly cultivated, will provide vegetables for a family of five for the whole year, and one can easily judge the valuable contribution this made to the standard of living. There is a long waiting list for allotments in Sheffield, and the authorities have been held up for some time for the want of land."

A House of Commons White Paper of 1913<sup>2</sup> furnishes interesting comment on this so-called "want of land" for allotments in Sheffield. From this White Paper it appears that in the year 1911-12 the total area of Sheffield was 23,662 acres, of which 9,944 acres, or between *one-half* and *one-third* of the total, were rated as *agricultural land*. The total rates paid amounted to £830,135 to which the so-called agricultural land contributed only £2,357.

### 34. *How Rating System encourages the withholding of land from use—housing.*

For some years prior to 1914 house-building was failing to keep up with the demand; houses which were old and out-of-date were not rebuilt or reconstructed, and many thousands of houses which were totally unfit for human habitation remained standing.<sup>3</sup> The system of tenure which enabled land-holders to become, in fact, absolute owners, and which concentrated the ownership of land in this country into a few hands, besides depopulating the country-side and

<sup>1</sup> P. 276.

<sup>2</sup> White Paper No. 119 of 1913.

<sup>3</sup> See Report of the Land Inquiry Committee, vol. ii, Urban.

preventing access to land there, had put a stranglehold on the development of our towns by enabling owners to hold up the surrounding land. This land is either held out of use altogether, or used for some agricultural purpose when it is urgently required for building, the owners knowing that, when demand has become sufficiently urgent, their price will be given. Also the system of rating in Great Britain, under which land which is unused escapes rates altogether, and land under-developed only pays a few shillings per acre as agricultural land, whatever its value for building purposes may be, actually encourages the withholding of land from use, or keeping it in an under-used state.

In 1885 the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes in the Majority Report stated: "At present land available for building in the neighbourhood of our populous centres, though its capital value is very great, is probably producing a small yearly return until it is let for building. The owners of this land are rated, not in relation to the real value, but to the actual annual income. They can thus afford to keep their land out of the market, and to part with only small quantities, so as to raise the price beyond the natural monopoly price which the land would command by its advantages of position. Meantime, the general expenditure of the town on improvements is increasing the value of their property."

The Report of the Land Inquiry Committee,<sup>1</sup> 1913, referring to the rating system, states: "Under our present rating system there is no strong inducement for him to sell his land at the price buyers are willing to offer to-day. He can afford to wait until the demand becomes more active."

**35.** *Evidence before Land Inquiry Committee as to difficulty in obtaining land for building before the war.*

The latter Report also provides ample evidence of the difficulty of obtaining land before the war in most of our towns, either at a reasonable price or at all, and how, in consequence, building and improvement schemes were held up or abandoned. The Town Clerk of Hampstead is quoted as stating: <sup>2</sup> "My experience in Hampstead has been certainly

<sup>1</sup> *The Land: Urban*, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> P. 244.

that schemes of public improvement, especially road improvements, have in the past been postponed or abandoned owing to the prices asked for land being prohibitive."

The Town Clerk of Middlesbrough said:<sup>1</sup> "Our Corporation have postponed, and even abandoned, schemes for public improvement owing to such difficulties." The Clerk to the Tonbridge U.D.C. also stated<sup>2</sup> that "schemes of public improvement have been postponed here owing to the difficulty of acquisition."

An informant from a Nottinghamshire Rural District wrote:<sup>3</sup> "When I wanted, some twenty years back, to build half a dozen workmen's houses, as my workpeople were shamefully overcrowded and other labourers worse, the landlord would only sell the land, rented nominally at 20s. per acre (but with a rebate), for £150 per acre. The land has since for twenty years been let at 20s. per acre, and is still assessed at that rate."

The late Mr. Arthur Chamberlain, referring presumably to Birmingham, is reported as saying:<sup>4</sup> "In 1906 my company (Kynochs, Ltd., explosive manufacturers), for the purposes of the health and happiness of a large body of workpeople (2,000) wanted to obtain land for the purpose of erecting by easy stages their own houses. The scheme was brought to a full-stop and finally abandoned because of the inability to get land. We could not get land at a reasonable price. There was plenty of land in a suitable position, which we would have paid a fair price for, but the owners chose to hold the land up for the unearned increment. They asked such a price as made it impossible for me to build anything but slum property."

### 36. *Dear land leads to overcrowding.*

The Report of the Land Inquiry Committee on the subject of overcrowding states:<sup>5</sup> "The crowding of houses to the acre, producing wildernesses of long, mean streets, although it was originally due to the high price of land, has become a custom which may tend to prolong itself even when land is cheapened. But, unless rents are to be materially increased, the size of building plots must always be determined by the

<sup>1</sup> P. 244.

<sup>4</sup> P. 325.

<sup>2</sup> P. 244.

<sup>5</sup> P. 121.

<sup>3</sup> P. 320.

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price of land. . . . There is abundant evidence that in many towns, under existing conditions, it would be impossible to build cottages with adequate space round them and let them at rents which workmen can afford to pay."

### 37. *Large areas of all towns rated as agricultural land—a premium on non-use or under-use.*

The House of Commons White Paper issued in 1913, and already referred to, shows for the year 1911-12 with respect to each Municipal Borough or other Urban District in England and Wales the *area* of the Borough or District and of the agricultural land comprised therein, the total amount of rates collected, and the amount of rates collected in respect of the agricultural land. It will be seen from this White Paper that there is a very large proportion of the areas of all our cities and towns rated as *agricultural* land,<sup>1</sup> that rates must form an intolerable burden on industry, and that there is plenty of "agricultural" land in all those towns from which come complaints of inability to obtain land and of exorbitant prices charged. We may take the cases of Tonbridge (Kent) and Birmingham, to which reference has already been made :

*Tonbridge* has a total area of 1,356 acres, of which 632 acres are rated as *agricultural* land. The total rates collected amounted to £24,530, of which the agricultural land paid £156.

*Birmingham* <sup>2</sup> has a total area of 43,000 acres, of which nearly one-half, 20,000 acres, are rated as agricultural land. The total rates collected amounted to £1,618,000, towards which the agricultural land subscribed £7,000, or 7s. per acre.

*Bradford* forms another striking example : The total area is 22,843 acres, of which 14,534 acres are agricultural land. Total rates collected amounted to £604,426, of which the agricultural land, some two-thirds of the whole, paid £3,520, or 4s. 10d. per acre.

In *Rhondda* there is a similar contrast. The total area is 23,885 acres, of which 19,888 acres are rated as agricultural

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that by the Agricultural Rates Act, 1896, agricultural land is assessed at its net annual value to one-half only of the poor rates (by the Agricultural Rates Act, 1923, this has been reduced to one-quarter); and by Public Health Act, 1875, only pays one-quarter of the general district rates.

<sup>2</sup> The White Paper returns for Birmingham are incomplete. These figures were given in a reply in the House of Commons on April 1, 1914, by Mr. Herbert Lewis.



land. Total rates collected amounted to £213,984, of which the agricultural land, *nearly five-sixths of the whole*, paid £288, or 3½d. per acre.

Corresponding figures for London are omitted from the White Paper, but were obtained by Mr. Edgar J. Harper, who gave them in a paper he read before the Royal Statistical Society in March 1918. The figures are for the year 1911-12. Taking the *Administrative County of London*, we get :

Total area	.. .. .	74,816 acres
Area of agricultural land	.. .. .	8,102 „
Total rates	.. .. .	£15,869,181
Rates paid by agricultural land	.. .. .	£2,594

If we take the Administrative County and include thirty-five adjacent districts we find :

Total area	.. .. .	193,889 acres
Area of agricultural land	.. .. .	53,242 „
Total rates	.. .. .	£19,918,856
Rates paid by agricultural land	.. .. .	£13,661

In the Administrative County the agricultural land paid only 6s. 5d. per acre and other land <sup>1</sup> £237 17s. per acre, and in the larger area the agricultural land only paid 5s. 1d. per acre against £141 10s. per acre for the other land.

All the above examples would seem to prove conclusively that the system of rating in force in this country places a heavy penalty on the user of land in proportion to the use he makes of the land, and at the same time encourages the owner who is withholding his land from use for a rise.

### 38. *Post-war housing shortage and unemployed builders. Rise in price of land and the ring round the house.*

The housing shortage of 1914 became intensified during the war owing to an almost complete cessation of building, with the result that at the end of the war it was computed that some 500,000 houses were urgently required, and there is little doubt that the number was roughly correct. Since the end of 1918, however, in spite of the enormous demand for houses and the complete disappearance of the house "to let," even

<sup>1</sup> This figure is actually much higher, for the "other land" includes streets, parks, public open spaces, sites of unrated churches, chapels, etc., and a large area of vacant land not assessed at all.

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the annual number of houses normally required has not been built, so that the actual shortage in 1923 was greater than ever. At the same time there is the remarkable fact that there were 142,000 *unemployed* in the building and constructional trades in October 1922, and there were actually *less men* returned as in these trades in 1922 than in 1914, the numbers for 1914 being 908,000 and for 1922, 868,000.<sup>1</sup>

Private builders have been almost powerless to build, at any rate the smaller type of house, because the cost of production was such that if the finished product were offered at its economic rent, no one would have been able to pay it, and few could or wished to purchase at such a price. The result has been that the majority of the working-class houses built since 1918 have been subsidized by the Government and local authorities, and those who rent these houses are thus living to a certain extent at the expense of the community.

As an example of what the London County Council has had to pay for *agricultural* land required for building we may quote the three estates of Becontree, Bellingham and Roehampton :

	Area.	Annual Net Rateable Value before Purchase.	Purchase Price
	Acres.	£	£
Becontree .. ..	2,050	3,590	295,544
Bellingham .. ..	252	490	50,339
Roehampton .. ..	148	951	120,000

Not only have enormous prices been paid for all sites, but also for all materials, which are controlled by various rings and combines, having as their object the maintenance of high prices and the absorption of as large a proportion as possible of any Government subsidy. These trusts and combinations among the manufacturers of the component parts of the house have been described as "the ring round the house," but it is clear that these monopolies are but subsidiary to the great monopoly which comprises all the natural physical resources of the country, and would be powerless but for this monopoly.

<sup>1</sup> "The Third Winter of Unemployment."

## PART III

### CHAPTER XIV

#### SCOTLAND AND THE LAND MONOPOLY

Clan system of tenure—Chiefs become absolute owners of the land—Highland clearances; sheep displace men—The spoiling of the peasants—Evidence of eye-witnesses; glens depopulated—Sutherland; Strathnaver—Evicted migrate to towns and colonies—Knoydart and Strathglass—"Weeding-out" in Ross-shire—Loss of hill pasture ruins crofters—The Hebrides; Skye—Sheep-farms in the small islands—Depopulation of Argyllshire; peasants become paupers—Land monopoly in Scotland and restriction of opportunities for employment—Deer displace sheep—Spread of deer forests causes loss to farmers—Much deer-forest land suitable for crofts—Government Reports and damage done by deer and small game—Possibilities of afforestation; subsidiary industry for small holder—Rural depopulation and emigration—Number of agricultural workers declines; gamekeepers increase—Conversion of arable to pasture and pasture to sporting land continues—The "led" farm—Demand for small holdings—Crofters prefer tenancies with security of tenure—Land monopoly and the Government Settlement Scheme—Deer forests and loss of production—Water power in Highlands.

##### 1. *The Clan system of tenure.*

IN early times in the Lowlands of Scotland land was farmed on the communal system much the same as it had been in England, but in course of time most of this had become enclosed and appropriated by private owners. In the Highlands, however, right up to the Rebellion of 1745, the old clan system had persisted. Under this system the land occupied by the clansmen belonged to the clansmen as a whole, and the chief of the clan was not lord and owner of the land, but merely chief and lord of the clansmen. As Professor Blackie says: <sup>1</sup> "Every man also has his share in the territory occupied by the clan for tillage or pasturage, as the situation may dictate; and although he may pay some acknowledgement in the shape of what we call rent to the

<sup>1</sup> *The Scottish Highlanders and the Land Laws*, p. 10.

head of the clan, it stands more in the place of what we now call taxation for public purposes, than a price paid for temporary occupancy under the modern relation of landlord and tenant. Formal leases there could be none where the right of every member of the clan to have a share in the property of the clan was practically recognized by both parties." And referring to the inalienable right to security of tenure which the clansmen enjoyed, Blackie says that the "fact that it was so is the most scientific explanation of the belief that it is so; but the belief and the fact manifestly arose equally, and in the most natural way possible, from the historical basis on which all Celtic property in land originally rested, viz. on the principle that the land belongs to the tribe, and, of course, as a rule the members of the tribal family have a right to their portion in the common inheritance." He goes on to say—what, of course, is perfectly true—that the fact of this communal ownership and inherited and inalienable security of tenure, was in no way altered or less true because it was not mentioned in the Statute Book or legally recognized.

## 2. *The Clan chiefs become absolute owners of the land.*

In 1745, however, all this was changed in the Highlands. Up to this time the northern glens had been thickly populated with a hardy race of clansmen, always ready to leave their flocks and herds and to enter battle at the bidding of their chief. But this period of freedom was to end, for, as a result of the 1745 Rebellion, an Act was passed in 1752 annexing *inalienably* to the Crown all the lands of the chiefs who had joined in the rising, and the rents of such lands were to be used for the express purpose of "civilizing" the inhabitants. The real effect of this measure was that the Crown confiscated land belonging to the *clansmen*, for it had never been the private property of the chiefs, and the evil results were seen in 1783<sup>1</sup> when these lands were restored to the original *chieftains or their descendants*. The chieftains thus became absolute owners, in fact, of the clan territories—an ownership with a legal backing—and the results of this change to the country as a whole speedily became apparent.

From that time onwards began that systematic clearance

<sup>1</sup> 24 George III, cap. 57.

of the inhabitants from the country-side known as the "Highland clearances"—a system which was to turn vast areas of Scotland into an unfertile desert. It was to be largely a repetition of what had occurred in England in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and some striking similarities will be noted as we investigate.

### 3. *Highland clearances begin. Sheep eat up the men.*

These great clearances, which brought about the depopulation of the Highland glens, were caused by much the same conditions as the enclosures of the Tudor period—that is, the rise in the price of sheep and wool and the consequent desire for large sheep-runs, causing the displacement of numbers of small tenants. Curiously enough, this system of clearing out the small tenants and replacing them with sheep was known as *Improvement*—a word which in England had come to mean appropriation with a view to an increase of rent, and which in the Highlands connoted the same thing.

When this system had worked itself out, and sheep had replaced the sturdy clansmen, then the price of sheep and wool fell, many sheep-farmers were ruined, and in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the sheep-farms have been to a large extent replaced by vast deer-forests and lands used entirely for sport.

### 4. *Large and small holders alike insulted and robbed.*

In these clearances the peasantry, both large and small holders, were treated alike, and none of them was recognized as having any rights in the soil. There was seldom any question of compensation for deprivation of land or house, though in the majority of cases the huts and houses had been built by the peasants themselves. Notices were issued broadcast ordering them to leave on a certain day, and those who were not out by that day were forcibly ejected with their goods, and their huts burnt; and to add insult to injury, they were informed in many cases when their notices were served that arrangements had been made to emigrate them to Canada or Australia. In many cases the dispossessed peasants were actually herded on to the ships which had been provided to transport them to the Colonies. Those who

refused to emigrate either endeavoured to eke out a miserable existence on barren land on the sea-shore or migrated to the towns—to Glasgow and south into England.

5. *Reputable eye-witnesses and contemporaries condemn the evictions. Fertile and populous glens rendered barren and depopulated.*

The methods employed in carrying out these clearances in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are testified to by many eye-witnesses, and the accounts of these read more like the advance of a Turkish army in Armenia than occurrences in a civilized country in the nineteenth century. When we consider the cruelties perpetrated in dispossessing these peasants who had farmed the glens for centuries, and the hardships they suffered after eviction, all facts which are proved up to the hilt by reputable eye-witnesses, we are less disposed than ever to think that the writers of the sixteenth century in any way exaggerated when describing the methods of the great enclosers in England and the sufferings of the deprived peasants.

In the Report of the Departmental Committee on Deer Forests, 1922,<sup>1</sup> we find this reference to the clearances: "The latter half of the eighteenth century saw the beginning of a great change. This was the advent of the south-country farmer with his Cheviot and Blackface stock, and the displacement of the old population with its primitive breeds of cattle and sheep to make way for him. . . . But when their action is viewed now in the cold light of history, it is clear that the power of wholesale eviction by private persons was one which ought never to have been permitted, and one which was rendered doubly odious in this case by contrast with the patriarchal relations which existed between chieftain and clansmen down to the rising of '45. . . . Fair and far-sighted contemporary critics like Sir Walter Scott condemned them out and out." <sup>2</sup>

It is often said nowadays that farming or small holdings in the greater part of the Highlands would be impossible, that a living could not be made there owing to unfertility, and that the bulk of the land is only fit for deer forests. It is well

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 1636.

<sup>2</sup> P. 2 of the Report.

to bear this in mind when we come to examine some of the clearances in detail, and find that these so-called wild, unfertile spots formerly nourished a happy, hardy population, which the Government called uncivilized, but of whose help they were glad in time of war.

6. *The Sutherland clearances. Devastation of Strathnaver—eye-witnesses.*

The clearances began in Sutherland about 1807, and according to Hugh Miller,<sup>1</sup> of the *Witness* (Edinburgh), "between the years 1811 and 1820, 15,000 inhabitants of this northern district were ejected from their snug inland farms."<sup>2</sup>

With reference to the devastation of Strathnaver, Professor Blackie quotes from *A Tale of the Strathnaver Clearances*,<sup>3</sup> written by a lady of his acquaintance. This writer said: "My great-grandfather, being a rather extensive landholder, was the first to suffer, and his death-warrant could not have caused him greater dismay than the notice to quit his home. His flocks were scattered, and had to be sold for whatever they could realize. His house—the home of his ancestors—was burned before his eyes. His effects were turned out to the roadside, and his wife and family left without shelter. . . . The inhuman laws of men made that beautiful valley what it now is—a wilderness. . . . My grandfather . . . about twelve miles farther down the glen, like the rest of his kith and kin, was doomed. . . . The family were shifted from one place to another, until in two years they had no less than five removals. Ever as they went the black flood of eviction followed them, until at last they landed, or stranded rather, on the stony braes of Tongue. There they had to build some kind of abode and subsist as best they could. Their eight milk cows had dwindled down to one, for they had to part with them from time to time to obtain the bare necessities of life."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Alex. Mackenzie in *The Highland Clearances* (1883).

<sup>2</sup> P. 55.

<sup>3</sup> *Celtic Magazine*, December 1883, pp. 57–60. Strathnaver contained about 2,000 inhabitants.

<sup>4</sup> General Stewart of Garth, a contemporary writer, quoted by Alex. Mackenzie, said: "Over the whole of this district where the sea-shore is accessible the coast is thickly studded with thatched cottages crowded with starving inhabitants."

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In 1883, while the Royal Commission was sitting, John Mackay, a civil engineer of Hereford, took statements in Gaelic from several old people who had been eye-witnesses of the Strathnaver clearances.<sup>1</sup> The following are extracts from two of these, but all testify in the same strain :

“ William Morrison, 89 years of age, crofter, Dalacharn, Farr. I was born at Rossal, on Strathnaver, and remember well of seeing the following townships on fire :

Rossal, with about 20 houses.

Dalmalarn, with 2 houses.

Dalvina, with 2 houses.

Achphiis, with 2 houses.

“ The people as a rule were, in these townships, expected to be away from their houses before those employed in burning came around. . . . For people to say that there was no cruelty or harshness shown the people when they were burnt off Strathnaver is a glaring lie, which no amount of flowery language can hide.

“ I declare this statement of mine is true.

“ WILLIAM MORRISON.

Witnesses	{	Donald Mackenzie, Minister, Free Church,
25th Aug. 1883		Farr.
		Angus Mackay, Divinity Student, Farr.”

“ Grace Macdonald, 88 years of age, Annadale, Farr. I was born on Strathnaver, in a place called Langall, and was 19 years of age when we were evicted from the Strath. I remember well the burning of the houses. I saw the following five townships burnt :

Langall, with 8 houses.

Totachan, with 2 houses.

Coile an Kian, with 2 houses.

Ealan a Challaidh, with 2 houses.

Sgall, with 4 houses.

“ There was no mercy or pity shown to young or old—all had to clear away, and those who could not get their effects

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Professor Blackie.



removed in time to a safe distance had it burnt before their eyes. . . . The evicted people had to go down to the bleak land skirting the sea-shore, and there trench and reclaim land for themselves.

"I declare this statement of mine is true.

GRACE MACDONALD.

Witnesses { Mundo Mackay.  
29th Aug. 1883 { Mary Macleod."

7. *The evicted starve on the sea-shore or migrate to the towns and the Colonies. Cruelties of the factors.*

Hundreds of those evicted in Sutherland left the district altogether, but for some allotments were provided on barren land by the sea-shore—land so poor that the only chance of paying the rent demanded was by fishing. Starving peasants were even prevented in many parts from taking the mussels from the sea-shore. "Ancient respectable tenants, who passed the greater part of their lives in the enjoyment of abundance and in the exercise of hospitality and charity, possessing stocks of 10, 20, and 30 breeding cows, with the usual proportion of other stock, are now pining on 1 or 2 acres of bad land with 1 or 2 starved cows, and for this accommodation a calculation is made, that they must support their families, and pay the rents of their lots, not from the produce, but from the sea."<sup>1</sup>

Loch, in his *Sutherland Improvements*,<sup>2</sup> says: "After pawning everything they possessed to the fishermen on the coast, such as had no cattle were reduced to come down from the hills in hundreds for the purpose of gathering cockles on the shore. Those who lived in the more remote situations of the county were obliged to subsist upon broth made of nettles, thickened with a little oatmeal." This rather resembles an account of the natives of Terra del Fuego than of the peasants of a fertile land.

From 1809 for several years there were annual evictions in Dornich, Loth, Golspie, etc., and hundreds were ejected, the heath pasture often being destroyed by fire to ensure their departure. The Earl of Selkirk sent many peasants

<sup>1</sup> Alex. Mackenzie, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> P. 76.

to his Red River Estates in British North America, most of whom were eventually killed by Indians.<sup>1</sup> Kildonan, with 2,000 inhabitants, was devastated, three families only remaining. The Rev. D. Norman Macleod, referring to the clearances of 1809, said: "I myself ascended a height about eleven o'clock in the evening and counted two hundred and fifty blazing houses. The conflagration lasted six days."<sup>2</sup>

Much of the cruelty exercised in these evictions was on the part of the estate agents or factors who acted for absentee owners. Of these Blackie says: "No despotism exercised by a Turkish Pasha over the fellahs is more oppressive and more grinding than that which may be exercised by a Highland factor in remote districts, acting for an absentee landlord." And what the Rev. T. M. Davidson, a minister of the Established Church in Skye, said of Skye at this time might, from all the evidence at our disposal, be said of the rest of the Highlands: "If he makes a complaint he can get no redress. There is no law in Skye."<sup>3</sup>

#### 8. *The clearing of Knoydart and Strathglass. Destruction of crops and property.*

Donald Ross, an eye-witness of the clearance of Knoydart,<sup>4</sup> described this occurrence in 1853. The whole district was cleared, houses burnt or levelled, and many of the inhabitants shipped off to North America. He writes: "The scene was rendered more painful as the Strath was dotted with stacks of corn, large plots of potatoes, and with grass that could be easily mowed down with the scythe. But the voice of man was gone—he was not to be found. The crop was there, but strangers owned it. . . . There is something most melancholy in connection with the entire removal of a people from an inhabited and cultivated district. . . . The decree is tantamount to interdicting the command of the Most High, who said to man, 'Go, replenish the earth, and subdue it.' . . . Last spring all the crofters on the Glengarry estates in Knoydart were served with summonses of removal, accompanied with a verbal message from Mrs. Macdonell and her factor, that Sir John Macneil, Chairman of the Board of Supervision,

<sup>1</sup> Alex. Mackenzie, p. 23

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Blackie.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Alex. Mackenzie, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Inverness.

Edinburgh, had agreed to convey them all to Australia. . . . The state of the neighbouring properties was such that they could not expect one inch of land thereon—no, not even one night's shelter. . . . The ship came to Isle Oransay, and Mrs. Macdonell and her factor came to Knoydart, and saw the families carried across in boats, and put on board. The scene at this time was indescribable." When these families had gone the work of demolition began. "The uninhabited houses were levelled first, then the houses of those who refused to go on board the ship to Canada. . . . The inmates were ordered out, and their articles of furniture were thrown out after them; beds, chairs, tables, pots, stoneware, clothing, were all thrown topsy-turvy down the hill. . . . Clouds of dust rose to the skies, while men, women, and children stood at a distance completely dismayed. What took them years to collect and erect was destroyed and scattered in a few minutes." <sup>1</sup>

Referring to Strathglass, Alexander Mackenzie writes: "Another chief's widow . . . who died in 1788 gave the whole of Glencruaich as a sheep-farm to one south-country shepherd, and to make room for him she evicted over 500 people from their ancient homes." <sup>2</sup> He also states that in 1801 Strathglass was cleared almost to a man, 799 leaving for Nova Scotia. In 1802, 473 left the same district for Upper Canada and 128 for Nova Scotia. In this year also 550 left Knoydart.

### 9. *The "weeding-out" of peasants in Ross-shire. Loss of hill-pasture causes ruin of crofters.*

A special commissioner of *The Times*, reporting in 1845 <sup>3</sup> on the Ardgay district, Ross-shire, said: "Let me add that so far from the clearance at Glencalive being a solitary instance in this neighbourhood, it is one of many. The tenants of Newmore, near Tain, who, I am told, amount to sixteen families, are to be weeded out (as they express it here) on the 25th by the same Mr. Gillanders. The same factor manages the Strathconon estate, about thirty miles from Newmore, from which during the last four years some hundreds of families have been weeded out."

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Blackie, pp. 67-70.

<sup>2</sup> Alex. Mackenzie, p. 187.

<sup>3</sup> May 15th. Quoted by Alex. Mackenzie.

Of Strathconon Alexander Mackenzie writes: "From 1840 to 1848 Strathconon was almost entirely cleared of its ancient inhabitants to make room for sheep and deer, as in other places, and also for purposes of extensive forest plantations. . . . The factor, Mr. Rose . . . began by taking away, first, the extensive hill pasture, for generations held as club-farms by the townships, thus reducing the people from a position of comfort and independence; and secondly as we saw done elsewhere, finally evicting them from the arable portion of the strath, though they were not a single penny in arrear of rent. . . . No fewer than twenty-seven families were evicted from Glen Meine alone. . . . It is computed that from four to five hundred souls were thus driven from Strathconon and cast adrift on the world. . . . In most instances where they settled down and reclaimed land, they were afterwards re-evicted, and the lands brought into cultivation by themselves taken from them, without any compensation whatever, and given at enhanced rents to large farmers. This is specially true of those who settled in the Black Isle, where they reclaimed a great deal of waste, now making some of the best farms in the district." <sup>1</sup>

We are told that between 1851 and 1863, 2,231 had to leave the Isle of Lewis. At Leckmel, in the parish of Lochbroom, a Mr. Price, who had bought the estate in 1879, in the following year "took away every inch of land—arable and pastoral—into his own hands, and thus by one cruel stroke reduced a comfortable tenantry from comparative affluence and independence to the position of mere cottars and day labourers, absolutely dependent for subsistence on his own will and the likes and dislikes of his subordinates." <sup>2</sup>

Immediately hill-pasture, which was usually used in common, was taken the crofters were doomed.

# 10. *Evictions in the Hebrides—the clearing of Skye.*

Referring to the islands and the Hebrides, Alexander Mackenzie quotes the Rev. John MacMillan, Free Church Minister of the parish: <sup>3</sup> "Thus it was that about the year 1808 the stream of Highland soldiery, which had been gradually

<sup>1</sup> Alex. Mackenzie, pp. 144-6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

ebbing, gave symptoms of running completely dry. . . . From the mainland the work of destruction passed rapidly to the isles. These remote resting-places of the Celt were quickly cleared; during the first ten years of the great war Skye had given 4,000 of its sons to the army. It has been computed that 1,600 Skyemen stood in the ranks at Waterloo. To-day in Skye,<sup>1</sup> far as the eye can reach, nothing but a bare brown waste is to be seen, where still the mounds and ruined gables rise over the melancholy landscapes, sole vestiges of a soldier race for ever passed away."

In 1849 Lord Macdonald arranged the eviction of 600-700 persons from Sollas, North Uist, and although there was much opposition, they were all evicted in the following year. Between 1851 and 1853 the villages of Boreraig and Suisimish, Skye, were cleared, forty-two families being turned adrift, many of whom died on board the emigrant ship. From Colonel Gordon's estates in South Uist and Barra some 1,100 persons were compelled to emigrate, and some of those who attempted to escape to the hills were hunted down.

### 11. *Sheep displace men in the small islands.*

The Rev. Donald Maclean, minister of the parish of Small Isles, referring to the Isle of Rum in an article in *The New Statistical Account*, said: <sup>2</sup> "In 1826 all the inhabitants of the *Island of Rum*, amounting at least to 400 souls, found it necessary to leave their native land and to seek for new abodes in the distant wilds of our colonies in America. . . . A similar emigration took place in 1828 from the Isle of Muck, so that the parish has now become much depopulated." In 1831 this parish contained 1,015 people, although previously its population was larger. In 1851 it had fallen to 916, and in 1881 to 550. In 1881 the population of *Rum* was only 89.

Hugh Miller described the Isle of Rum as follows: "We could see among the deserted fields the grass-grown foundations of cottages razed to the ground; but the valley, more desolate than that which we had left, had not even its single

<sup>1</sup> Population: 1841, 23,082; 1911, 12,719; 1921, 11,031.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Alex. Mackenzie, pp. 222-3.

inhabited dwelling ; it seemed as if man had done with it for ever. The island, eighteen years before, had been divested of its inhabitants, amounting at the time to rather more than 400 souls, to make way for one sheep-farmer and 8,000 sheep. All the aborigines of Rum crossed the Atlantic ; and, at the close of 1828, the entire population consisted of but the sheep-farmers and a few shepherds, his servants : the Isle of Rum reckoned up scarce a single family at this period for every five miles of area which it contained."

**12. *The depopulation of Argyllshire—peasants become paupers.***

Mr. Somervill, of Lochgilphead, writing of the evictions in Argyllshire, says :<sup>1</sup> "The work of eviction commenced by giving, in many cases, to the ejected population facilities and pecuniary aid for emigration, but now the people are turned adrift, penniless and shelterless, to seek a precarious subsistence on the sea-board, in the nearest hamlet or village, and in the cities, many of whom sink down helpless paupers on our poor roll ; and others festering in our villages form a formidable Arab population, who drink our money contributed as parish relief." This same writer speaks of a stretch of nine miles of country on the west side of Loch Awe, which formerly was divided between forty-five farms, but was at that time rented by one person for sheep.

A deputation from the Glasgow Highland Relief Board visited the Isles of Argyll in 1849, and the particulars they give in their Report enable us to make some useful comparisons.<sup>2</sup> The Census figures for Mull show the population in 1821 as 10,612 ; in 1841 as 10,064 ; in 1871 as 6,441 ; and in 1881 as 5,624. In 1921 the population was only 3,389. The deputation reported great distress at Tobermory, where the evicted tenants were congregated. The population of Ulva in 1840 was 360 ; in 1881 only 51 ; and in 1921 it was 45. In 1849 the population of Iona was 500 ; in 1881 it had fallen to 243 ; and in 1921 it was 234. The population of the Isle of Coll fell from 1,193 in 1755 to 1,162 in 1801 ; to 643 in 1881 ; and by 1921 it had fallen to 383.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Alex. Mackenzie, p. 227.

<sup>2</sup> Alex. Mackenzie, p. 228.

**13.** *The population of Argyllshire decreases and pauperism increases.*

There were many evictions between 1828 and 1853 in Ardnamurchan, and much good arable land was given over to sheep and deer. In one place 3,000 acres were divested of crofters to make room for one sheep-farm. In 1831 the parish of Morwen contained 2,137 persons, and in 1881 only 714. Macleod stated that when the population was 2,000 the parish received £11 per annum from Church funds for the poor, and in 1863, under the Poor Law, upwards of £600 annually.

Glenorchy, where the Marquis of Breadalbane was sole proprietor, had 1,806 inhabitants in 1831 and 831 in 1841. On this owner's Perthshire estates, between 1834 and 1853, some 500 families were removed. Taking the population for the whole county of Argyll<sup>1</sup> we find that it has varied as follows :

1831	..	100,973 (of which rural population was about 85,973)
1881	..	76,468 (of which rural population was about 46,081)
1911	..	70,902 (of which rural population was about 48,419)
1921	..	76,862 (of which rural population was about 46,751).

The following figures show an interesting comparison :

SCOTLAND.			
Amount spent for Poor Relief.			Population.
1846	..	£300,000	2,770,000
1881	..	£900,000	3,627,000

Thus we see that pauperism grew during this period nine times faster than population.

**14.** *Land monopoly in Scotland causes depopulation and great restriction of opportunities for employment.*

We thus see that in Scotland, as in England, land had become monopolized in the hands of a few, the majority being dispossessed and compelled to compete for a livelihood in the

<sup>1</sup> See 1921 Census, County of Argyll, p. 245. In 19 of the 28 mainland parishes and in *all* the insular parishes the population is at least 30 % less than the maximum of any previous Census. In 9 instances there is a loss of 70 % or more. The population is less than any Census between 1801 and 1861.

crowded towns or to emigrate to the Colonies. It will be found that in the counties of Perth, Argyll, Inverness,<sup>1</sup> Ross and Cromarty, and Sutherland<sup>2</sup> the great majority of the parishes had a smaller population in 1911, and even in 1921, than they had in 1831.

The opportunities for employment were curtailed in Scotland to an even greater extent than they had been by the enclosures in England ; for in Scotland vast areas of the land from which the peasants were evicted came to be used, as we shall see, solely for sport. Not only were the dispossessed deprived of employment, but others were shut out from the natural opportunities which they had formerly utilized.

**15. *Sheep give place to deer. Great increase in area of deer forests.***

We have now to inquire into the results of these great clearances in the Highlands, and to ascertain the condition and appearance of the country when they had been carried out.

After 1850 the value of wool began to decline, a decline which became more rapid after 1874. The value of sheep also declined rapidly after 1884, and the result of this fall was that from 1850 onwards *deer forests* increased rapidly at the expense of sheep-farms, and by 1892 the rents of sheep-farms had fallen by some 50 %.<sup>3</sup>

The total acreage of Scotland is 19,070,466 acres. In 1891<sup>4</sup> the area devoted to deer forests *and* exclusively to sport was 2,585,973 acres.

Deer forests alone in the six Highland counties in 1883 covered 1,711,892 acres, and in 1898,<sup>5</sup> 2,287,297 acres. In 1904 the figures for the same counties were 2,920,097 acres, and in 1908,<sup>6</sup> 2,958,490 acres.

The total area of deer forests and land used for sporting purposes was in 1908, 3,519,678 acres, and in 1911,<sup>7</sup> 3,599,744

<sup>1</sup> Inverness—Population 1911, 87,272 ; 1921, 82,455.

<sup>2</sup> Sutherland—Population 1911, 20,179 ; 1921, 17,802.

<sup>3</sup> See Report of Departmental Committee on Deer Forests (1922).

<sup>4</sup> Parliamentary Return: Deer Forests, etc.

<sup>5</sup> Return of Deer Forests in Six Highland Counties, 1899.

<sup>6</sup> Parliamentary Paper 220, 1908.

<sup>7</sup> Deer Forests and Sporting Lands (Scotland), Parliamentary Paper 538, 1913.



acres, or about one-fifth of the total acreage of the country. The area given for deer forests in 1920<sup>1</sup> is 3,432,385 acres, but apparently this figure does not include land, other than deer forests, used exclusively for sport. Taking, therefore, this fact into consideration, and also that owners are not compelled to furnish returns, and that large areas returned as agricultural or pasture are often used exclusively for sporting purposes, it is probable that the area of deer forests and sporting lands is nearer 4,000,000 acres.

If we compare the increase of deer forests, etc., in some individual counties the figures are striking :

	1891.	1898.*	1911.
	Acre.	Acre.	Acre.
Argyll .. .. .	215,298	232,698	392,754
Inverness .. ..	941,781	789,831	1,081,172
Ross and Cromarty ..	812,819	795,545	927,854
Sutherland .. ..	212,658	330,873	436,323
Caithness .. ..	38,500	64,000	93,856

\* Figures for 1898 exclude sporting lands other than deer forests.

The Deer Forest Report of 1911 tells us that there were some 200 deer forests, ranging in extent from 100 acres to 110,000 acres.

**16. *The spread of deer forests causes loss to neighbouring farmers and general decay and desolation.***

There is abundant evidence in all Government and other Reports of the harm this extension of deer forests has done both to the land so used and to neighbouring farms. It is the policy of the deer forest owner to render the whole district comprised within the forest area, and also the neighbouring land, as desolate as possible, in order that the deer may not be disturbed. As the deer were replacing the sheep, the leases of sheep and other farms were not renewed or were terminated with compensation before the end of their term. At the same time houses and farm buildings have been allowed to fall into decay, and in this way vast tracts have been completely

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 1636.

denuded of men in order that the deer may flourish. As the Report of the Land Inquiry Committee (Scotland) states : <sup>1</sup> "The value of a deer forest tends to be inversely in proportion to the number of people located on it or in its vicinity." And with reference to the effect of the encroaching of the deer on farm-land, the Report adds : "In addition to the utilization of this land for the purposes of this costly sport it is to be remembered that throughout the area devoted to deer forests there is serious deterioration in drainage, in the quality of the grass grown on the land, etc. This is borne out by the fact that throughout these areas there are many remains of small houses and evidences of land which formerly was cultivated, but has steadily depreciated ever since it has been given over exclusively to sport. . . . On the eviction of the crofters, their patches of cultivated ground for many years grew luxuriant herbage, but gradually the ground has gone back to the more or less barren state in which it was before reclaimed by the crofters." <sup>2</sup>

### 17. *Much deer forest land suitable for crofts.*

It has been seen that large areas of land now under deer forests were formerly fertile crofts, and in addition thousands of acres have been rendered useless for crofts owing to the loss of the hill-pasture, which in the Highlands is usually essential to the success of a small holding.<sup>3</sup> The Royal Commission (Highlands and Islands) reported in 1895 that in the six Highland counties there were 1,782,785 acres of land used for sporting or grazing purposes which were quite suitable for small holdings ; and in proceedings under the Crofters Commission portions of deer forests have often been assigned for small holdings.

A vast amount of damage is done to crops on farms near deer or grouse preserves, and it is stated that in some parts the owners arrange with tenant farmers to keep only a portion of the possible sheep-stock in the interests of game-rearing.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> P. 176.

<sup>2</sup> P. 174.

<sup>3</sup> "The fact is that these higher altitudes supply only the summer grazing for the deer, and the deer winter on the low grounds and are often fed by the keepers. Indeed, as a matter of fact, a Highland sheep will survive where a deer will perish" (*Scotland*, p. 186).

<sup>4</sup> *Scotland*, p. 165.

18. *Government Reports testify to enormous damage done by deer and small game. Tillage continues to decrease.*

The Report of the Departmental Committee on Deer Forests, 1922, and both the Majority and Minority Reports of the Game and Heather Burning (Scotland) Committee, 1921, agree that deer forests cause a vast amount of damage annually to crops, and that small holders are the greatest sufferers, as their farms are usually at higher altitudes and fringe the game moors.

The *Majority Report* of the latter Committee states: "That the damage caused by deer to crops and grazing land is widespread and serious is clearly established by the statements of numerous witnesses."<sup>1</sup> Mr. James Scott, S.S.C., in the *Minority Report*<sup>2</sup> writes: "The 'unhealthiness' has reached this point, that farmers have their crops eaten up wholesale, their grazings ruined, and they themselves harassed and impoverished to a degree which makes one wonder whether the evidence adduced related to some wild and semi-civilized country instead of Scotland. Evidence bearing out this description to the letter was given not only by small holders, but also by large farmers, by a member of the Land Court, by executive officers and others."<sup>3</sup>

"The evidence submitted to the Committee satisfied me that the damage done by winged game, and particularly by grouse, pheasants, and black game, is great, and results in serious loss of food supplies. Some idea of the possible culprits in causing damage may be obtained from the fact that about 3,000,000 grouse<sup>4</sup> alone are killed every year on Scottish moors."<sup>5</sup> . . .

"There has recently been published by the Board of Agriculture a statement as to the numbers of live-stock in Scotland, based on returns made on June 4, 1920. The statement shows an alarming state of affairs. Cattle have decreased by 63,925, or 5.2 %. The numbers of sheep are the

<sup>1</sup> Par. 46.

<sup>2</sup> This Report only differs from the Majority Report in the remedies proposed.

<sup>3</sup> Par. 14.

<sup>4</sup> See Majority Report, par. 63: "Grouse do considerable damage to corn crops on upland farms adjoining moors in late harvests, when the corn, on account of wet weather, cannot be expeditiously ingathered."

<sup>5</sup> Par. 34.

lowest recorded since the returns were first collected over fifty years ago, being 49,111 below last year's figures, and more than *half-a-million* below the *decennial average*.<sup>1</sup> . . . The acreage under *wheat* shows a decrease of 25,150 acres, and is the lowest recorded since 1913. The acreage under oats shows a further decline, the decrease this year being 78,613 acres, or 7·08 %."<sup>2</sup>

### 19. *Great possibilities of afforestation in Scotland.*

The question of afforestation is a very important one for Scotland, where, according to the Royal Commission on Coast Erosion and Afforestation,<sup>3</sup> some 6,000,000 acres, or nearly one-third of the total area, might be afforested. This Report points out that the United Kingdom is the most poorly afforested country in Europe,<sup>4</sup> but the best suited to the growth of timber trees, both by reason of soil, climate and lack of certain insect pests. But as with agriculture in Great Britain, so with afforestation, "the sylvicultural details have to be accommodated to the hunting and shooting, and trees must be taken down in different places to make cover for foxes, and so on."<sup>5</sup> In Scotland deer do great damage to the trees, and through neglect poor quality timber results.

The Commission considers that afforestation might be a useful subsidiary industry, and refers to its financial success in Germany. The Report of the Land Inquiry Committee quotes an example of the economy of a German forest in the Spessart given by Sir John Stirling Maxwell: <sup>6</sup> "The forest extends to 10,000 acres, and attached to it are about 3,000 acres of agricultural land. This area of 13,000 acres would . . . in the Highlands compose one small deer forest or a couple of fairly large sheep-farms. . . . As two sheep-farms it would support two tenants and at most 13 shepherds, or 15 families in all. Divided among a number of smaller tenants it might . . . support at most some 60 families." In Germany the

<sup>1</sup> Par. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Par. 44.

<sup>3</sup> Cd. 4460, 1909.

<sup>4</sup> Percentage of land occupied by forests:

Scotland	..	4·6	Holland	..	7·9
England	..	5·3	France	..	17·0
Denmark	..	7·2	Germany	..	25·9

<sup>5</sup> The Report.

<sup>6</sup> P. 255.

permanent staff in this forest consists of a head forester and clerk, 6 forest guards, 10 unskilled workmen, and 25 other men who find employment all the year round as contractors. There is thus permanent employment for 43 men. In addition there are 80 woodcutters employed for about 6 months, 70 women and children for about 2 months on nursery planting, etc., and 260 men employed in forest industries. The forest and its industries thus provide constant employment for 303 men, besides the 80 men employed for 6 months and the 70 women and children. The total population of the area affected by the forest is 2,500, and of these some 1,520 are directly dependent on the forest, the remainder being small tradesmen, saddlers, smiths, and workers in small agricultural industries.

**20. *Forestry a subsidiary industry for the small holder. Large and increasing market for timber.***

Referring to the great benefits which silviculture would bring to the small holder, the Royal Commission reports : " It is precisely when the small holder has leisure that silviculture is most insistent on a supply of labour, and it is therefore not surprising that your Commissioners have had much evidence placed before them of the natural relationship that exists between small holdings and forestry. And similarly with regard to the relationship of forestry and agriculture. . . . Most of the witnesses examined were emphatic in maintaining that forestry promised to be a powerful agency in stemming the tide of rural depopulation and in attracting back to the country men and families who have migrated to the towns."

The Departmental Committee on Deer Forests (1922), referring to the area afforested between 1892 and 1912, reports : " We are satisfied that, even at the prices then current, a considerable part of the area afforested at this period could have been farmed at a profit after paying a moderate rent." And the Report adds : " This additional area includes a better class of land than the older forests, and embraces large tracts of first-class summer grazing from which the sheep stock had been removed for the reasons above given."

A paper on afforestation read at the Ordinary General

Meeting of the Surveyors' Institute in June 1923 contains some interesting comments on British Forestry. The following is an extract from this paper : <sup>1</sup> " Our woodlands are at zero because Britain has hitherto been content to think in trees and not in forests. We possess less growing timber than any kingdom or dominion—in fact, our woodlands are infinitesimal and our reserve of growing trees the most meagre in the world. It is doubtful if the marketable woodlands in the country cover 3,500 square miles. . . . It appears to me that there never was a time when the prospect of a reasonable financial return was better than now. For five hundred years or more the virgin forests of the world have been exploited or destroyed, and for every 100,000 acres of virgin forest which has disappeared, less than 1 acre has been restored or replanted. While this encroachment on timber reserves has been in progress the world-demand for wood has increased with the population as well as through the more extensive uses found for it. In 1851 we used 3·5 cubic feet of imported timber per head. In 1911 the consumption per head was 10·5 cubic feet. Raw wood is now used in 1,500 different ways."

## 21. *Rural depopulation continues and emigration increases.*

The Report of the Scottish Land Inquiry Committee shows that rural depopulation has proceeded in Scotland as in England, and in many districts in a much more wholesale fashion. The counties of Argyll, Berwick, Perth, and Sutherland had in 1911 a smaller population than in 1801 ; and in 533 of the 874 parishes of Scotland the population was in 1911 smaller than in 1901. The Report states : " The drain of emigration has been most severe among the younger members of the rural community, and already the loss of so many of the best of the younger rural workers has attained the proportion of a national calamity. There has been witnessed the complete obliteration of large numbers of rural homes which, from time immemorial, have been the source from which has come a large proportion of the men who have achieved at home and abroad, in the practice of war and in peaceful pursuits, those distinctions which have gained for the Scottish

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of the Surveyors' Institution*, September 1923.

race a proud reputation all over the world.”<sup>1</sup> Emigration to non-European countries rose as follows :

1909 .. .. .	33,366
1910 .. .. .	58,384
1911 .. .. .	61,328

In 1878 English emigrants formed 64 % of the total from the United Kingdom and Scottish 10 %, but in 1911, while the English percentage was 65 %, the Scottish had risen to 19 %. The Committee was informed throughout Scotland that the chief reasons for this emigration were “ the lack of opportunities of access to rural land at home and the absence of the prospects of a career on it.” In combating the view that it is town pleasures that attract the people from the country, the Committee point out that the majority of those who emigrate go to parts of the Colonies much farther removed from town life than any part of the Highlands would be.

## 22. *Decline in number of agricultural workers and increase in gamekeepers.*

The following figures show the decline in the number of rural workers and the increase in the number of gamekeepers :

*Number of persons (male and female) engaged in Agriculture (all persons except female relatives of farmers engaged in work on the farm and farmers' sons under fifteen years) :*

1871 .. .. .	254,842
1881 .. .. .	240,131
1891 .. .. .	213,060
1901 .. .. .	204,183
1911 .. .. .	199,083

This shows a decrease of 22 %.

### *Male Shepherds and Farm Labourers.*

1871 .. .. .	119,391
1881 .. .. .	102,075
1891 .. .. .	95,470
1901 .. .. .	83,441
1911 .. .. .	80,582

This shows a decrease of 32 %.

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The following includes *all* persons (male and female) aged ten years and upwards occupied in the specified classes :

FARM SERVANTS.			GAMEKEEPERS.		
Number returned.		Decrease.	Number returned.		Increase.
1881.	1911.	1881-1911.	1881.	1911.	1881-1911.
135,966	86,538	— 49,428	4,246	5,919	+ 1,673

### 23. *Conversion of arable to pasture and pasture to sporting land continues. Sporting land rapidly deteriorates.*

In Scotland, as in England, we find the continued conversion of arable land to pasture in addition to the conversion of pasture to deer forest. In 1912 the arable land covered 3,325,027 acres and permanent grass 1,496,307 acres, the two together comprising about 25 % of the total area. Between 1882 and 1911 the arable area decreased by 251,375 acres, 123,000 acres being withdrawn from arable between 1901 and 1911. Permanent grass increased by 400,000 acres between 1870 and 1910.

Depopulation and the increase of sport has led to a great deterioration of land of all classes and to the decay of houses. The Land Inquiry Committee states : “ We find also that there has been much deterioration of land through growth of bracken, rough grass, heather, etc. This has been most notable in the case of land that is used very largely for sporting purposes. With the reduction of the resident population and of sheep stocks and cattle in the interest of sport, there has proceeded a great increase in the growth of rough grass, heather, bracken, etc., so that, as a result, large areas are now losing much of their value for the carrying of sheep and cattle. In the deer forests also, where there are no sheep stocks, there is great deterioration of the grasses on the lower lands, large tracts of which formerly under cultivation now grow what is known as ‘ fent.’ ” <sup>1</sup>

The replies from all districts justify this report, the following being typical of many : (Inverness-shire <sup>2</sup>)—“ All the land on the fourteen farms in — Deer Forest, from which the tenants

<sup>1</sup> P. 26.

<sup>2</sup> S.S. 57.



were evicted, is now well grown over with heather. The arable land was as good as any in the parish. The occupiers of the farms, who, with their families, numbered 119 individuals, depended largely on the excellent pasture, which carried 10,000 sheep, 200 head of cattle, and 20 horses. The occupants now are 5 keepers, with 4 ghillies for the season, and the annual output now is about 100 stags and hinds."

#### 24. *The evil of the "led" farm.*

There is a form of ingrossing and consolidation of farms known as the "led" farm system, which is especially rampant in the southern part of Scotland. This is a system under which a farm is let to a farmer who does not reside on it for grazing purposes only, with the natural result that houses and buildings on the "led" farm fall into decay, and the land rapidly deteriorates. The Report of the Inquiry Committee states: "The 'led' farm has generally a dilapidated appearance, the tenant of a 'led' farm being content, as a rule, with a little less profit per acre, so that cultivation is not so thorough, and further deterioration of the holding continues often practically unchecked."<sup>1</sup>

The Committee further describes this system as one "which lays great areas of the country-side practically derelict, extinguishes the business of the local tradesmen and shopkeepers and all who are dependent on the economic life of the district, reduces the number of homesteads, and withdraws the land from better utilization in agricultural production—in short, stifles all possibility of the normal maintenance of the life and activity of the locality, and conduces to still further rural decay. . . . In many districts, particularly in the south-east, the complaints are very loud, and the picture of the depleted country-side, with many farm buildings in ruins, is quoted as a standing condemnation of the system."<sup>2</sup>

The evil of the "led" farm is testified to by witnesses from many counties. A reply from Aberdeen states:<sup>3</sup> "There are 26 holdings in the outlying parish and 10 in this area that have gone out of existence of recent years; the houses have fallen into decay and the land has been added to other farms.

<sup>1</sup> P. 31.

<sup>2</sup> P. 33.

<sup>3</sup> S.S. 126.

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There is a strong feeling in the parish against this practice, and when a small holding comes into the market there is a keen demand for it."

### 25. *Great unsatisfied demand for small holdings.*

Throughout Scotland there is, and for a long time has been, a great unsatisfied demand for small holdings or crofts, and where access to land can be obtained, the Scotch farmer, famous for his efficiency, succeeds in making a living. The Report of the Royal Commission on the Highlands and Islands<sup>1</sup> provided a mass of evidence from all parts as to the great land hunger and the possibility of making a comfortable living on crofts which might be carved out of the various deer forests. Witnesses from all parts gave evidence as to the larger population and lack of pauperism before sheep and deer turned out men.

John G. Mackay, a merchant of Portree, said :<sup>2</sup> " I wish to show that before the introduction of these changes the people of this country were in a state of comparative comfort, that since that time the population has been gradually but speedily reduced, and that in *adverse ratio* as the population was being reduced pauperism increased to an alarming extent. . . . Skye before the introduction of sheep-farming was able to maintain a much larger population than at present, and that almost entirely on its own resources. . . . Skye in its present state would not maintain itself for two months of the year."

Donald Macrae, a crofter of Raasay, presented a statement on behalf of the tenants :<sup>3</sup> " Townships in Raasay are, and unless relieved will remain, in a condition of chronic poverty because :

1. Land occupied by crofting tenants is poorest land.
2. Townships are overcrowded with crofters and cottars.
3. Not hill-pasture necessary for fair living.
4. Best townships have been cleared for sporting preserves.
5. Deer, rabbits, etc., do incalculable harm."

<sup>1</sup> 1895.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. i, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

**26.** *Crofters prefer to be tenants with security of tenure rather than owners.*

As in England, so in Scotland, small holders do not wish to purchase, but prefer to be tenants with security of tenure. The Inquiry Committee,<sup>1</sup> referring to the Small Landholders Act, 1911, say that by 1913 "25,000 persons have secured fixity of tenure . . . and 700 are in course of getting small holdings." But here again those who seek to replace men on the land are continually being thwarted by the land monopoly, by the owner who objects to the presence of crofters and demands a prohibitive price for his land. On this point the Inquiry Committee say: "In many districts where few persons have made applications for new holdings, we are satisfied that if new holdings were, in fact, made there would be many more applicants for them. . . . They see no immediate prospect of getting a holding, and they rather shrink from placing themselves in the position of being applicants for something which does not exist. They have an idea very frequently that it will damage them in their existing occupations."<sup>2</sup>

Aberdeen is a county of small holdings, the number of holdings in 1913<sup>3</sup> being 10,952 of an average size of 57·3 acres. This county contains the largest number of arable acres in Great Britain except Lincolnshire and Norfolk. Compared with the three south-eastern counties, we find that, although its cultivated area is only 25 % more, it had nearly four times the number of farmers and bailiffs.

**27.** *How land monopoly has killed the Government Settlement Scheme.*

The Report of the Scottish Board of Agriculture for 1921 shows us how difficult it is to get access to some of the Highland territories which so many people are in the habit of calling worthless. The Report states: "Heavy outlays have to be incurred in acquiring Highland pastoral lands, including the cost of acquisition of sporting rights<sup>4</sup> over the land and

<sup>1</sup> P. 142.

<sup>2</sup> P. 105.

<sup>3</sup> Cd. 6966.

<sup>4</sup> These formerly belonged to the clansmen.

also of taking over sheep stocks which are in most cases acclimatized<sup>1</sup> and bound to the ground."

"Descendants of crofters who were removed some generations ago from the island of Raasay left Rona, erected houses on Raasay and took possession of and cultivated land there. . . . The Board had opened negotiations in the year 1919 for a scheme of land settlement in Raasay, but . . . inability to agree with the owners as to price prevented progress."

"The case of Raasay is a striking illustration. It was recognized that the circumstances of the applicants were necessitous, and had it been possible to provide for them at a reasonable cost, a scheme would long ago have been in operation; but to proceed . . . was impossible except at a prohibitive cost."

"The terms on which the Board can now acquire the land . . . are still such that they can be justified only by the exceptional circumstances of the case. If similar terms had to be arranged generally in schemes of land settlement the funds available for the settlement of ex-Service men would fall far short of meeting the demand."

Comment on the above would be superfluous. It is obvious how such a system restricts the opportunities for employment and causes widespread poverty and unemployment.

Referring to the western islands, the Inquiry Committee say: "It is astonishing how these men in the islands can make productive use of the least favoured land, often unreclaimed moorland—land which would be regarded as valueless by the average small holder in England."

## 28. *Loss of production caused by deer forests.*

The Reports of the Departmental Committee on Deer Forests (1922) and the Game and Heather Burning (Scotland) Committee, 1921, furnish figures to show what might be produced in the way of meat and wool if deer were replaced by sheep. One sheep is given to every 5 acres, and the carcasses are reckoned as if immediately slaughtered. At this rate, if the deer-forest area of 1912 had been under sheep, it would have produced:

<sup>1</sup> I.e. payment must be made for climate.

1,834 tons of meat, worth .. .. .	£169,050
2,455,747 lb. of wool, worth .. .. .	94,648
Skins to value of .. .. .	34,324
<hr/>	
Total value at that time .. .. .	£298,022
1920 figures, total value .. .. .	£512,996

Mr. James Scott, in his Minority Report, quotes the Ministry of Food as authority for saying that the meat consumed in Scotland in the first twelve months of the rationing period was 97,361 tons, and that an expert witness had estimated the total weight of all kinds of game at 2,225 tons. It had also been estimated by a witness before the Napier Commission in 1884 that the weight of meat provided by deer amounted to one-fifth of the mutton displaced.

## 29. *The possibilities of water power in the Highlands.*

The water power resources of the Highlands appear to be very large, and Mr. Newlands, the chief engineer of the Highland Railway Company, estimated that it would be possible to develop some 500,000 horse power—a power which, at a small cost, would provide a large population with light and heat. Again such a development is prevented by land monopoly. “The absence of a considerable resident population operates against the larger utilization of water power. The inducement to locate new industries utilizing water power in other countries has been strengthened largely by the presence of a very considerable resident population. There is difficulty in obtaining access to land for the purpose of small industries on account of the opposition of the proprietors of the land, who are unwilling to depreciate its present value as sporting preserve by allowing small industries and small centres of population to grow up. It is reported that several schemes for utilizing water power have been rendered abortive owing to the difficulty of obtaining access to the necessary land.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Inquiry Committee (Scotland), p. 248.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE MINERAL MONOPOLY

Land tenure and mineral resources; available coal supply—Report of Acquisition and Valuation of Land Committee—How minerals are lost to community—Mineral monopoly; Report of Coal Industry Commission—Private ownership and difficulty of access to minerals—Loss caused by unnecessary barriers and penalties for letting down surface—Wayleaves—Insecurity of tenure; results—Wales; land monopoly and development of quarries—Royalties; some individual holdings—Mr. Smillie and inequities resulting from private ownership—Opportunities for employment artificially restricted—Monopoly of minerals unsound.

#### 1. *Land tenure and mineral resources. The available supply of coal.*

THE nature of the tenure of land does not, of course, affect only land used for agriculture or building, but land in the economic sense, all the natural physical resources of the country, not only the surface of the earth, but all the mineral resources contained therein. The mineral resources comprise not only coal-mines, but all metallic ore-mines, quarries, brickyards, etc. It would be impossible and also unnecessary to deal in detail here with the various kinds of minerals; but as tenure affects them all in a similar way, it is proposed to deal chiefly with coal and mining in general, and to examine what is said on the subject in the Reports of the Acquisition and Valuation of Land Committee (Mines and Minerals), 3rd Report, 1919, and also in the Reports of the Coal Industry Commission, 1919.

Coal and iron are at the basis of the manufacturing industries of this country, and the building trade is, among others, vitally affected by the accessibility and the prices of bricks, slates, cement, metals, etc.

With regard to coal, there would appear to be no shortage of the supply, for, according to the Final Report of the Coal Conservation Committee, 1918: "Professor H. S. Jevons (1915) . . . gives 197,000,000,000 tons as a maximum quan-

tity within 4,000 feet from the surface. Adopting this as an outside estimate, and deducting 15 % on account of 'pit wastage'—i.e. coal which is left for one reason or another in the workings—we obtain a new figure for actually available coal at the surface of (say) 168,000,000,000 tons, or (say) 580 times our present annual output."

2. *Land tenure and the loss of minerals to the community.*  
*Report of Acquisition and Valuation of Land Committee.*

The Acquisition and Valuation of Land Committee in their 3rd Report, dealing with mines and minerals, collect together causes of the loss to the nation of its mineral resources—losses, they add, which may result in the permanent loss of the minerals in question. These causes, which we set out *in extenso*, are as follows :

(i) "Where the owner of minerals is unwilling to sell, lease or otherwise deal with them. In some of these cases the owner is unreasonable, and it may be clearly in the national interest that the minerals should be worked. In others it cannot be said that the owner in refusing permission to work is unreasonable, but it may be, nevertheless, *that the interests of the nation should prevail over the private interests*<sup>1</sup> of the owner. In both cases, so long as *no means exist for compelling the owner to grant facilities for working the minerals*, they are lost to the nation, either permanently or for the time being."

(ii) "Where the owner of an area of minerals demands exorbitant terms for *permission to work*. In such cases it often happens that the area becomes land-locked, as, once the adjoining worker has passed the area he is working, it would not pay him to return, and if the area is too small to justify the expense of sinking a shaft, *the minerals are permanently lost*."

(iii) "Where the minerals lie under land which is copyhold, customary freehold or enfranchised copyhold, and, either the Lord of the Manor on the one hand, or the copyholder

<sup>1</sup> The italics in each case are ours.

(whether enfranchised or not) or customary freeholder on the other, *refuses to join in a lease.*"

(iv) "Where minerals are owned in small separate areas by a number of different owners, or where, in an area of whatever size, the minerals are owned by a number of owners as tenants in common, and, in consequence, *it is difficult or even impossible, to obtain agreement.*" (Often the result of Enclosure Acts.)

(v) "Where the mineral owner, although willing to grant all reasonable facilities for development, has no power to do so *owing to some legal disability.*"

(vi) "Where the owner with a title to minerals *cannot be traced.*"

(vii) "Where the owner of the surface has a legal right to the support of the surface by the minerals underneath or adjoining. In many cases the owner or lessee of the minerals has no right to let down the surface even on the terms of accepting liability for all damage caused to the surface by subsidence; if the minerals are worked, the owner of the surface can usually obtain an injunction restraining him from working on mere proof that substantial subsidence will be caused. There are also cases where, although the mineral worker has the right to let down the surface, he can only do so on payment of all damage caused. In such cases the possibility of subsidence causing greater damage than the profit to be made by working the minerals makes him unwilling to take the risk. *Minerals thus left unworked are, for the most part, permanently lost to the nation.*"

(viii) "Where coal is left in barriers on the boundary to divide one mine from another or to prevent the flow of water from other workings on a higher level. The total area of minerals left *in barriers* is *very large*, and a great saving would be effected if some portion only could be worked. . . . Where a barrier cannot be touched without danger to the men working in the mine, it must, of course, remain."



(ix) “ Where owners *refuse to grant or demand unreasonable terms* for wayleaves, either above or below ground. The mineral worker, in order to work his mine efficiently and economically, as it is in the national interest that he should do, requires, on the surface, rights of access to railways, canals, highways, etc., and, below the surface, rights of passage through minerals belonging to others. If such rights or wayleaves are denied to him, or are only obtainable on unreasonable terms, it may become *impossible or commercially impracticable to work certain minerals*. As a result, they are lost, or at any rate the *economical development of the mine is impeded*.”

(x) “ Where there is *difficulty in obtaining on reasonable terms the surface rights* which are necessary to the efficient working of a mine. In all such cases, where there is no independent authority to compel, *the price of accommodation land or facilities may be excessive*. This difficulty is, of course, not limited to mining enterprise.”

(xi) “ Where *restrictive covenants* affecting either surface or minerals, imposed for the protection of the surface owner, *impede the development of the minerals*.”

(xii) “ Where, owing to unforeseen circumstances, or to the conditions imposed on a mining lessee by the terms of his lease, a mining lessee finds himself unduly hampered in the development of a mine, or of certain seams in the mine, unless he can obtain some modification or readjustment in the terms of the original bargain.”

(xiii) “ Where the ‘lay-out’ of a mineral field and its apportionment among different mineral workers (being determined by the accidents of surface ownership) are, from a technical mining point of view, unsatisfactory, and the *productivity of the field*, as a whole, or of some of the mines in it is, *contrary to the national interest, thereby prejudiced*.”

With reference to par. (v) above, the Report adds : “ For example, a trustee has no power to grant an option, and a tenant for life for the purposes of the Settled Land Acts

is under a similar disability, since in the exertion of his powers under these Acts he is in a position analogous to that of a trustee. Options have, for many years, been frequently adopted in the development of land, and we think that the disability in this respect of trustees and tenants for life might be removed with considerable advantage. It also sometimes, though rarely, happens that a tenant for life cannot utilize the provisions of the Settled Land Acts in order to grant a mining lease, and consequently an application to the court is necessary in order to enable a lease to be granted by the trustees. 'This procedure entails expense and delay.'

**3. *The mineral monopoly. Corroborative evidence in the Report of the Coal Industry Commission.***

The Report of this Committee is a very strong indictment of the system of land tenure in this country, a system which, as the Report shows, enables a few men to say whether or no minerals shall be procured at all, and if so, at what price. It is also shown how indirectly this system leads to large areas of minerals being untouched and so permanently lost to the nation. Moreover, the owners of mineral lands not only possess these powers, but they often exercise them, either in prohibiting the digging of minerals altogether, in delaying their development, or by charging unreasonable terms. When a cheap and abundant supply of minerals is urgently needed, it is obvious that any obstacle in the way of procuring these raw materials from the various mines and quarries is a plain source of unemployment.<sup>1</sup>

In the Report of the Coal Industry Commission we find much evidence supporting the findings of the Acquisition and Valuation of Land Committee, and evidence which goes to show that the system of tenure of mineral-bearing land results in unemployment.

**4. *The Chief Inspector of Mines and the difficulty of access to minerals on account of private ownership.***

Sir Richard Redmayne, K.C.B., H.M. Chief Inspector of Mines, in giving evidence before the Commission, said : <sup>2</sup> " In

<sup>1</sup> Unemployment not only for those who might be procuring the minerals, but for those who depend on these minerals in other industries.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. ii. of the Report, June 1919, p. 1154.

the early days of the Control of Coal-Mines cases were brought to my notice where the inability to obtain powers by colliery owners to work minerals was leading to loss of output. The difficulty in the way in most cases was either (1) due to the refusal of the owners of the minerals to treat ; or (2) the fact that the ownership of the minerals was unknown ; or (3) the subdivision of the area into very small ownerships whereby the cost of negotiating a lease in the ordinary way was prohibitive and out of proportion to the value of the coal to be won or worked."

Further on he states : " A number of cases have been brought to my notice of either absolute refusal to lease mines, or the demand of prohibitive and unreasonable terms, even where no grounds for asserting that mineral support was essential, existed. I venture to say that an examination of the majority of colliery plans would show cases where coal had been left unworked for one or other of the reasons given above, resulting in an absolute loss of coal for ever. I have one case in mind at the present time of divided ownership of minerals where one joint owner out of five is preventing coal being leased and the main *headings of a colliery* are standing at the coal in question. . . . Expense is incurred in so rearranging the workings as to cut round these areas, and this further involves loss of output."

Sir Richard then gives another example of how output is restricted : " A common source of trouble arises from the fact that with ownership in detached areas the whole of a mineral owner's property is leased to one colliery company, with the result that trade jealousy may prevent that company extending facilities for working of certain areas on proper terms to an adjoining colliery in whose mining area they exist. I have knowledge at the present time of a case where a colliery company have shortly to give up possession of the lease of an area now forming part of their royalty, which has been leased along with other properties to an adjoining colliery. The present lessees have to withdraw their rails and leave their present roads, although the area they are working will not be accessible to the new lessees for twenty or thirty years, and in some cases the coal to be left is actually surrounded by goaf and is of such extent that it will probably never be worked

by the newcomers, though accessible to the present lessees. I maintain that such cases as these constitute grave national losses, and cannot be defended on any economic grounds."

5. *Unnecessary barriers and penalties for letting down surface result in great loss of coal to the community.*

Sir Richard refers to the vast amount of coal lost through unnecessary barriers between mines, and the large areas left through fear of disturbing the surface. This coal has often to be paid for, though it can never be touched. On the subject of barriers he says: "Barriers separating royalties vary from 40 to 100 yards in width. A consolidation of royalties doing away with the necessity for boundaries for any but engineering purposes would bring a great part of the coal now so left into the market. The late Sir George Elliot estimated that this would, together with the saving in coal at present consumed in working circuitous haulages occasioned by these barriers, add 10 % to the annual output (1893)."

With reference to surface support he says: "I maintain that where the damage is likely to be considerable some graduation of the price of the coal should be made, as the custom now is the royalty owners not only often obtain payment for their coal at full value, but afterwards claim large sums for the *injury of the surface due to the working of such coal*. . . . The mine worker may have plenty of coal to work, and prefers to leave pillars sooner than face the risks of onerous claims for surface damage. In other cases where the lessee is anxious to work the coal he is prevented by the prohibition of the lessor. The damage which would result if the coal was swept out in a wide face would very often be negligible, and thus valuable coal is being left unnecessarily." <sup>1</sup>

. . . "At the moment I am considering the coal left not so much for mission-rooms, schools, and churches as the immense area of coal that is left under some of the old halls, where there is as much as 20, 30, 40, or 50 acres. If they allowed us to drive narrow places, or even wide places, through that coal and work it in a method approved by all mining engineers, 45 *per cent* of that coal could be recovered without any injury to the building." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> P. 1156.

<sup>2</sup> P. 1169.

### 6. *Wayleaves and heavy cost of negotiating small areas.*

Sir Richard also gave evidence as to the onerous terms frequently exacted by mine-owners, which hindered, and often prevented, production. He said: "I have frequently met with cases where the prospective lessor has known that his particular area of coal was of vital moment to a colliery company, and in some cases opportunity has been availed of to extract extortionate terms, either of wayleaves or by unduly inflating the price. *Underground wayleaves* are, in my opinion, *absolutely unjustifiable* where the exercise of such wayleave does not inflict any loss on the owner of the property passed through. In some cases lessees are forced to take in lease and pay minimum rent for seams which they have no possibility of being able to work in a reasonable time merely to obtain the lease of vital areas."

. . . "I believe the cost of negotiating small areas of coal is very often out of all proportion to their value, and is a substantial addition to the Royalty Rent. I recently had particulars of a case where the purchase price of the minerals was £350 and the negotiation costs were 80 guineas, and this despite the fact that no complications of title or of working were involved. It will be readily seen that such costs as these, coupled with stringent regulations as to reparation of surface damages, constitute a very serious tax on the working of coal in certain areas."<sup>1</sup>

### 7. *Insecurity of tenure resulting in cessation of production and loss of employment.*

The Land Inquiry Committee, in their Report on Scotland, 1913, express similar opinions to the foregoing, and arrive at the conclusion that land monopoly seriously restricts the development of minerals by making access difficult or impossible and tenure insecure. The Report states:<sup>2</sup> "We have also evidence that the landowners' monopoly powers sometimes inserted in mining leases are not infrequently of a burdensome and inequitable character, and are calculated to restrict the free development of the mineral field." . . . "The maximum, minimum, and average rates of royalty

<sup>1</sup> P. 1155.

<sup>2</sup> *Scotland*, p. 339.

charged per ton are: In Lanarkshire, 1s. 4d., 3d. and 7d. respectively; in Fife and the Lothians, 1s. 2d., 3d., 6d.; while in the case of gas-coal the rate is much higher, rising to 3s. 6d. a ton. The rates levied in Scotland, as in the United Kingdom, are greatly in excess of those paid on the continent."

"Mineral tenants have to make a very large initial expenditure of capital in sinking shafts, erecting buildings, machinery, houses, etc., and in laying branch railways and sidings. On the expiry of their leases they are often placed in a very disadvantageous position when negotiating for a renewal. They are faced with the alternative of agreeing to the landowners' terms or sacrificing the large capital which they have laid out in developing the workings."

With reference to this latter statement an example is given of a colliery which prior to 1906, with a capital of £200,000 and 600 men, was producing 1,000 tons per day. On the termination of the lease the owners demanded 10d. instead of 6d. per ton as royalty, and as this could not be paid, the mine was closed, the men discharged, and the workings demolished.

### 8. *An example from Wales—land monopoly and development of quarries.*

The Land Inquiry Committee (Urban) received similar reports from investigators in Wales with reference to the working of quarries. A report from North Wales runs as follows: <sup>1</sup> "There are many undeveloped quarries in the district, and where it is certain good slate may be obtained, but owing to exorbitant or prohibitive rent they demand for wayleaves, the quarries are not worked. In some cases land for tipping debris is difficult to obtain. . . . In this case the quarry is situated less than half a mile from the three railway lines, but owing to the difficulty of getting a small tram-line from the quarry the produce has to be carted. There are also other valuable slate quarries in the district undeveloped for want of land for tipping debris, and for running inclines and tram-lines from such quarries to the different railway stations." . . . "A quarry company wanted land for the

<sup>1</sup> *The Land*, vol. ii, p. 336.

purpose of shooting debris into a lake. The owner of the land adjoining the lake, who was also the lessor of the land occupied by the quarry, granted leave for the use of the land and for the debris to be shot into the lake on an annual payment of £100. Later a little more land was required for the same purpose, and an additional £100 a year had to be paid by the quarry company. When this accommodation proved inadequate, and a request was made for facilities for the use of a further piece of land, yet another £100 rent was demanded. At this point the company considered that they were unable to meet this extra demand, with the consequence that work in that portion of the quarry was discontinued, and nearly 150 men were dismissed."

### 9. *Amount of royalties and some individual holdings.*

Certain statistics furnished for the information of the Coal Industry Commission give some idea as to what is meant by "monopoly" as far as coal is concerned. Somewhat less than 4,000 persons own the coal of this country, but a large proportion of these are quite small owners. An Inland Revenue return gives the following figures concerning royalties : <sup>1</sup>

Total income from coal royalties in U.K.	..	£5,960,365
Number of Royalty Owners	..	3,789
Approx. 326 receive between	£2,000 and £6,000	
" 83 "	6,000 "	10,000
" 71 "	10,000 "	20,000
" 36 "	20,000 "	79,100 and over.

The following are statistics relating to some of the large owners :

#### *Duke of Northumberland.<sup>2</sup>*

Acreage of surface land .. ..	169,000 acres.
Proved mineral rights .. ..	244,500 "
(This includes about 168,500 acres of the lands comprising the 169,000 acres, as both surface and mineral rights of these form part of the estate.)	
1913-1918 average annual output .. ..	1,950,044 tons
1918 gross income .. ..	£82,450

<sup>1</sup> Coal Industry Commission Report, vol. iii, appendix No. 78.

<sup>2</sup> P. 625.

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### *Marquis of Bute.*<sup>1</sup>

Surface acreage .. .. .	128,582 acres
Proved mineral rights .. .. .	48,878 „
1912-1918 average annual output .. .. .	3,241,962 tons
Gross annual income for this period :	
Royalties .. .. .	£109,277
Wayleaves .. .. .	6,495

### *Ecclesiastical Commissioners.*<sup>2</sup>

Royalties and wayleave rents in 1917 ..	£370,000
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### *Earl Dunraven.*<sup>3</sup>

Surface acreage .. .. .	26,443 acres
Coal area .. .. .	17,602 „
1918 output (an average year) .. .. .	2,318,248 tons
1918 royalties and wayleaves .. .. .	£64,370

### *Earl of Durham.*

Coal area (Durham) .. .. .	12,411 acres
1913 output .. .. .	2,338,604 tons
1918 „ .. .. .	1,526,315 „
1918 gross income .. .. .	£40,522
1918 dead rents .. .. .	£10,000

## 10. *Inequities resulting from private ownership. Mr. Smillie's examination of a Kent coal-owner.*

Reference is made in the Report of the Coal Commission to the question of coal going as the absolute property of the surface owner when such coal has been discovered at the sole expense of the Geological Survey—a Government Department. But the inequity of such private ownership appears even more glaring when we examine some instances of how private prospectors are charged large sums by landowners to prospect for coal, and then have to pay onerous dues as soon as it is discovered. These payments are often so heavy as effectually to prevent capitalists from undertaking the task of looking for coal.

Interesting examples of how land monopoly stands in the way of development, and makes huge sums out of the efforts of the community to find minerals, are provided by the examination of Mr. John Dewrance, chairman of certain pioneer companies who prospected for coal in Kent, by Mr.

<sup>1</sup> P. 653.

<sup>2</sup> P. 584.

<sup>3</sup> P. 607.



Smillie, and also the examination of Mr. H. F. Plumptre, landlord of 1,062 acres in the Kent Coal Concession's area, by the same gentleman.

Examining Mr. Dewrance, Mr. Smillie said :

17283.—Supposing you bored in Kent and you found the coal all right, but you could not raise money to sink pits for the coal, would you still be required to go on paying a dead rent ?—Yes.

17284.—For what period ?—Some of them have periods at which you can discontinue, but not all of them.

17288.—I am putting to you that it might not have taken place, and you pay for the lease, and the pioneer boring company would have to pay £2 an acre for 60,000 acres ?—Ultimately.

(The dead rent for Kent Concessions was £400 the first and second years, £700 the 3rd year, and thereafter a yearly rate of £3,000 for 2,323 acres. Royalties were from £35 to £95 per acre according to thickness of seam, and 6d. per ton for ironstone.)

17319 (Chairman).—The fourth year—that is 1911—you had to pay £3,000 a year for this and getting no coal ?—Yes.

17326 (Chairman).—Mr. Smillie's point is, are you paying to these landlords this sum of £3,000, although as a matter of fact you have not got to the coal ?—We were up to the outbreak of war.

17327 (Mr. R. Smillie).—Are you paying a dead rent for that 400 acres<sup>1</sup> that is reserved, that you can never touch ?—Yes.

17328.—In the lease you have you can never take out the coal from under that 400 acres, but you are paying a dead rent for that coal that you can never take out ?—Yes.

Mr. Plumptre, the landowner, was then examined by Mr. Smillie.

17423.—There was no boring done on your estate until this lease ?—No.

17424.—It is quite possible there may not have been any coal on your estate at all ?—No, there may not have been.

17425.—And you did not take the trouble yourself to

<sup>1</sup> This was under the owner's private park.

prove it ?—I got them to give me the agreement to prove the coal before the lease was granted. There was an agreement that they should bore for coal, and prove it to my satisfaction and theirs before I granted the lease.

17428.—Did you yourself expend any money or promise to expend any money on the boring operations ?—No.

17429.—We may take it that you allowed other people to spend their money to prove whether you were the possessor of coal in that land ?—Yes. They rather came asking me to do it.

17431.—You allowed them to spend their money in proving that your estate was more valuable than you had any previous idea of ?—Yes.

17432.—From the time boring started were you charging a dead rent to these people, or an annual rent to these people whom you had allowed to spend their money in trying to prove your property was valuable ?—Yes ; when the lease was signed they paid dead rent.

17433.—Not only were other people spending their money to prove your property was more valuable than you thought, but you charged them for spending their money ?—Yes.

17434.—Is that just and equitable ?—Well, I believe it is a matter of business, and was the best way of inducing them to work the coal.

17437.—But they ran the risk of losing the money they were paying to you in order to prove your property was more valuable ?—Yes, but it was their choice<sup>1</sup> and not mine.

# 11. *Restricted access to mineral resources results in fewer opportunities for employment.*

The foregoing interrogatories require little comment, as they speak for themselves. As with the surface land of this country, both agricultural and building, so with mineral-bearing land, we see that it is within the power of a handful of owners to say whether there shall or shall not be access to these natural opportunities, and if permission is granted it is at a price which they choose to fix. If labour had easy access to these mineral resources, and owners were eager to

<sup>1</sup> There would seem to have been little choice in the matter.

develop them, it is easy to see that there would be a vast increase in employment, and the production of mineral raw materials would be enormously increased and cheapened. As it is, these natural opportunities for employment might, in many cases, be non-existent as far as labour is concerned, so difficult is it to obtain access to them.

12. *Private ownership and monopoly of minerals unsound.*

Referring to the question of the ownership of minerals, Mr. Justice Sankey in his Report says: "The seams of coal are now vested in the hands of nearly 4,000 owners, most of whom are reasonable, but some of whom are a real hindrance to the development of the national asset."

Sir Arthur Duckham reports that "the private ownership of minerals has not been and is not in the best interests of the community."

On this same question Sir Richard Redmayne says: "I believe that the incidence of private ownership of minerals is often prejudicial to the economic working thereof. A large proportion of the cost of winning coal is due to dead work, such as the construction and maintenance of shafts and underground roads, and the fullest value will only be obtained where proper regard is had to the geographical situation of the minerals in relation to the various shafts and roadways by which they can be won. It is obviously unsound to allow collieries to be closed from exhaustion when further mineral areas could be profitably and economically won therefrom if facilities were obtainable."

## CHAPTER XVI

### UNEMPLOYMENT—ITS CAUSE AND THE REMEDY

The limits and aim of the inquiry—Results; Saxon and early Norman England, no unemployment—Black Death and after; enclosures and unemployment—The surplus of unemployed a double loss to the community—Results of the spread of land monopoly—Opportunities for all, but labour fenced off—Growth of land monopoly a gradual confiscation of communal rights; confiscation still continuing—Land monopoly and insecurity of tenure—Unemployment and theories as to origin of rights—Land monopoly an unnatural barrier; land provides opportunities in plenty—The opportunities afforded by mineral resources—The monopoly in urban districts—Land necessary to all forms of labour—Capitalism and unemployment—Capitalist no power to oppress in absence of land monopoly—Over-population and unemployment—Rate of increase of population—Currency manipulation and unemployment—Machinery and unemployment—The Trade Cycle—The remedy—Results of destruction of land monopoly—State-ownership of capital unnecessary—Human wants unlimited in number; the home market—End of one-sided competition—Opportunity of employment for all.

#### 1. *The limits of the inquiry.*

OUR inquiry is finished, but before we sum up our conclusions let us review briefly the nature of the problem we set out to solve. In Chapter I we limited our investigations to the relation between unemployment and the tenure of land, because it seemed clear that unemployment must be caused, if there were sufficient land, by the inability of labour to get to that land; and also because, if it were established that Nature's opportunities for employment existed in abundance, unemployment could not exist so long as these were accessible to labour.

#### 2. *Real aim of the inquiry.*

The terrible phenomenon of unemployment means, then, that the sellers of labour are numerous as compared with those able to buy; that only comparatively few have the

means of employing labour. But as each seller of labour, now unemployed, would have the means of employing his own and someone else's labour if he had access to land, our inquiry has been directed to seeing whether he has that access, and if not, what is preventing it. In other words, we have investigated the problem in order to ascertain *why* only comparatively few have the means of employing labour, when really each worker himself has the supply of the *active* factor in production (labour), which, with the help of land, could satisfy his demand for wealth ; why it is that if a worker cannot find someone who has the means of employing his labour he should not be able to employ his own labour by producing to satisfy his needs directly from Nature.

In the course of this inquiry, in addition to arriving at a definite positive conclusion as to the cause of unemployment, we have at the same time been able to see that many other so-called explanations of the phenomenon really fail to explain anything except that labour is robbed of a proportion of its just reward. They do not explain why labour must remain unemployed unless an employer "furnishes" employment.

### 3. *Results of inquiry—Saxon and early Norman England, no unemployment.*

Our inquiry has disclosed the origin and progress of unemployment. In Saxon and early Norman times we saw that there was no unemployment, for the very good reason that the alternative to not being able to find a man with the means of employing one's labour was not unemployment, but employing oneself directly on the land. Nature's opportunities for employment were in abundance, and land was freely at the disposal of him who wished to till it. Land required for cultivation was neither held out of use nor under-used.

### 4. *Black Death and after—enclosures and unemployment.*

Soon after the Norman Conquest the lords began to enclose waste and common land, which, although frequently for colonizing purposes, resulted in a curtailing of common rights and a restriction of the number of opportunities of

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employment to which there was free access. The number of such opportunities still, however, exceeded the supply of labour capable of using them, and there was no unemployment.

But after the Black Death, when lords of manors were unable to obtain sufficient labour to carry on the cultivation of the land which had been formerly tilled, an enclosure movement began on a very large scale—began because wages had increased at the expense of rent, and continued because grass farming was seen to be profitable owing to an increase in the price of wool.

For a time, at any rate, opportunities for employment would still appear to have exceeded the supply of labour, with consequent full employment; but as the population recovered in numbers and the enclosure movement continued, about the middle of the fifteenth century, for the first time in English history, opportunities for employment began to fall short as compared with the supply of labour, and a surplus of unemployed labour appeared. This surplus was unable to obtain access to Nature's opportunities to satisfy its own demand for subsistence, etc.

The beggars came to town, but they were beggars who possessed in their own labour, if they had had access to land, the means of satisfying their own and their families' wants. They had been cleared directly off the land, and arguments about over-population or insufficiency of opportunities would not have appealed to those who had been robbed of their opportunities, and who saw a fence put round other opportunities on which they might have employed their labour.

### 5. *The coming of the surplus of unemployed—a double loss to the community.*

This was the beginning of unemployment, pauperism, and the drain from the country-side to the towns, which by a one-sided competition pulled down wages to the subsistence level. Then for the first time the supply of labour appeared to exceed the demand, the sellers of labour to exceed the buyers; but what had really happened was that for the first time the supply of labour was prevented from satisfying demand because it was denied that access to land which it formerly had.

Not being able to produce wealth for themselves, this surplus of unemployed either had to beg or steal, until the State imposed rates on those in work to provide for their maintenance. In this way the unemployed were a double burden on the community, for they caused loss to the artisans who formerly produced goods for them, which they were now unable to purchase, and they also had to be maintained out of the wealth produced by the rest of the community without being able to add anything to that wealth themselves.

**6. *Land Monopoly spreads until it covers the whole country—results.***

The enclosure movement continued throughout the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and unemployment increased as opportunities became more and more restricted ; but all through this period there were still opportunities for employment unmonopolized, but which, on account of inaccessibility and distance from centres of population, were as good as non-existent.

In the middle of the eighteenth century began the last and greatest period of enclosures, which by the middle of the nineteenth century had accounted for practically all the land in the kingdom. This period saw the wholesale depopulation and devastation of the country-side ; the rise of the slums of the great industrial cities, in which the dispossessed had to take refuge ; the pauperization of a large proportion of the population of Great Britain ; and the growth of that terrible one-sided competition among the surplus of unemployed for the jobs which appeared to be too few to go round.

We have seen how hundreds of thousands of these who now formed the unemployed surplus were directly deprived of their right to produce for themselves from the land, and that, once evicted, they had no means of employing themselves, no alternative employment if they were unable to find anyone who could buy their labour.

**7. *Ample opportunities for all, but labour is fenced off.***

This private enclosure of the land has continued, until, at the present day, a strong monopoly holds the land of Great

Britain in thrall, and a few thousand *owners* have the power, which they use, to deny access to the land, or to permit it only on terms which make industry difficult or impossible.

The opportunities for employment provided by the land of Great Britain are, as we have seen, more than ample to enable the supply of labour to satisfy its wants directly and to employ itself; but the land monopoly, which has grown until its tentacles reach to the farthest corners of the country, has artificially restricted these opportunities for employment, so that they are out of reach of labour. And so throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the surplus of unemployed has grown and persisted. It fluctuates in size, but the tendency seems to be for the minimum to increase as speculation in land increases, and the barrier round the land becomes more impenetrable, as we have seen it has done since the Great War.

### 8. *Gradual confiscation of communal rights.*

While tracing the connection between the gradual restriction of the opportunities for employment and the growth of unemployment, we have been unable to shut our eyes to the fact that in so appropriating and monopolizing the land the landlords were, in fact, robbing the community of its rights over the land—rights which originally it clearly possessed, and which should have been handed down from generation to generation.

We have seen, too, how, from the Norman Conquest and the Statute of Merton, these rights were not lost without a struggle, and how the Commons of England frequently rose in armed revolt down to the nineteenth century, until the country-side was so drained that there were few left to rise. In Scotland this wholesale confiscation of the rights of the community took place within comparatively recent times, and has turned fertile valleys into desolate wastes and depopulated the whole country-side.

### 9. *The confiscation a continuing one.*

In considering this aspect of the question it is important to bear in mind that this confiscation of the land did not,



as a wrong, cease with the generation in existence when it was committed ; but inasmuch as the land is now wholly monopolized the community is still being deprived of its right of access—the confiscation is a continuing one.

The significance of this can be seen very clearly when we recall how Professor Gonner was at pains to show that enclosure of the wastes did not result in depopulation if the enclosure was to arable. As we pointed out when considering that statement, although it may not have caused depopulation at the time, the private appropriation had given the landlords power to turn the land to grass, or even to hold it out of use entirely, at any time, because the appropriation affected all succeeding generations. We have already seen that this process has gone on all through the nineteenth century, and is even continuing at the present day. Land is—in theory, of course—still the property of the King, but his tenants have long ceased to pay rent, and it will be evident from our inquiry that fact and theory are now unrelated.

#### 10. *Land monopoly accompanied by insecurity of tenure.*

It has also been proved that, until the coming of unemployment and the beginning of land appropriation on a large scale, the Commons had security of tenure, even for those who held purely “at will,” and that as enclosure proceeded and unemployment grew, so tenure became less and less secure, starting with tenants “at will,” who then could show no legal right to security, and including copyholders, who, despite the fact that they had legal security of tenure, were frequently evicted or deprived of their copies. This insecurity of tenure has continued to the present day, and is exemplified in the system of yearly tenancies.

#### 11. *Conclusions as to cause of unemployment do not depend on any theory of origin of rights.*

But although we hold it clearly established that the land of Great Britain originally belonged to the community, and that communal rights were gradually filched away, yet our conclusions do not depend for their validity on the accuracy of any particular theory as to the origin of rights of the

peasants over the soil in Saxon and Norman times. Apart altogether from the question of the rights of the community or of the landlords at that time, our conclusions are based on the *fact* that when access to land was free to labour and opportunities were available for all, there was no unemployment, and that as the land became monopolized, as opportunities were artificially restricted, unemployment increased. Now at the present time, when all Nature's opportunities are monopolized and access to land is denied, there is always a large surplus of unemployed, with its complement a mass of underpaid labour.

*12. Land monopoly an unnatural barrier—land provides opportunities in plenty.*

The system of absolute private ownership of land, which we have called land monopoly, acts as a barrier around all Nature's opportunities for employment. It was this barrier which seemed so unnatural to the Diggers of Wellingbore when they said: "We find that no creature that ever God made was ever deprived of the benefit of the Earth but Mankind."<sup>1</sup>

If labour ceased to be deprived of the "benefit of the earth," our inquiry has demonstrated clearly that the opportunities afforded by the land of Great Britain would be ample in number. We have seen that there are millions of acres unused or very much under-used, and millions of acres of so-called cultivated land covered with poor grass and almost destitute of men. We have compared the agricultural production of some other countries, and have made it clear that the opportunities in agriculture and forestry alone in this country are enormous, and offer a field for the production of great wealth. Would labour be idle if it could get to these opportunities?

*13. Great opportunities afforded by mineral resources.*

Reference to the mineral resources of Great Britain was necessarily brief, but we saw enough to be able to demonstrate that here again there are vast opportunities for employment

<sup>1</sup> Chapter X, par. 12.

where Nature offers the things so many men lack. But again the Chinese wall of monopoly hinders the access of labour to these various mineral resources. The opportunities provided by the stock of minerals in Great Britain—the clays, building stones, and slates, in addition to the metallic ores and coal—are enormous in extent, but although many want these things, yet labour is denied access, or is only allowed in on terms which make production so dear that industry is restricted by those who call themselves owners. Land monopoly has fenced off the active factor in production.

#### 14. *Land Monopoly in urban districts.*

An investigation of the question of land tenure in urban districts revealed the same state of affairs: everywhere land is held out of use or under-used. In all our great cities and towns a large proportion of their areas is rated as agricultural land, most of which for all practical purposes may usually be regarded as unused, and in all these districts land is urgently wanted for new houses, for roads, improvements, and for the reconstruction of slum areas. But again we have found that, although in every instance the opportunities for the necessary improvements exist in abundance, yet land monopoly in case after case prevents access, or allows it only at a price which mortgages the increase of wealth resulting from the improvement for years ahead, and causes much loss in other directions.

Thus in every case we see that the opportunities for employment are clearly greatly in excess of the supply of labour in this country. All through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, by reason of the growth of population, and improvements, discoveries and inventions in manufacturing industries, the opportunities of producing wealth afforded by the land have increased enormously, but labour, except to a very limited extent, has been unable to avail itself of these advantages. Were only some of these opportunities accessible to labour, there is no reason why labour should not employ itself, produce the wealth direct from the land and exchange the surplus, so creating a real demand for other goods, and relieving industry of the burden of supporting the unemployed.

**15.** *Land necessary to all forms of labour—man a land animal.*

It will be advisable once again to emphasize how essential land is to all forms of industry, and how neither wealth nor services can be produced unless labour has access to it. It may not be clear to the clerk working in the top story of a London office how his employment depends on access to land, but this was brought home to many such workers during the Coal Strike of 1921, when they found themselves without work because some men who produced wealth directly from the land had ceased work; and this same clerk is also vitally interested in land tenure and access to land as regards his housing accommodation, the means of conveyance and transport he uses, and everything he buys.

Man produces wealth by adapting and combining, with the aid of the physical forces of Nature, natural products obtained from the land, by utilizing the reproductive forces of Nature in agriculture and farming, and by trading and exchanging. For each of these methods land is needed in varying quantities. It is not only required by the man directly engaged in producing wealth from the land, but for those who work on and manufacture the natural products, and by those who transport them or display them for the convenience of purchasers in retail shops. It is obvious that not only workers such as these are directly concerned with the question of access to land, but all clerical workers necessary to these forms of production, and also all producers of *services*—as, for example, doctors, lawyers, singers, etc.—who can only be paid in wealth produced in one of these ways. Truly has it been said that man is a *land animal*.

**16.** *Capitalism and unemployment.*

The growth of land monopoly, as we have already shown, brought many attendant evils in its train, and most of these have at various times been seized on as the cause of poverty and unemployment. Let us refer to one or two of these alleged causes.

Capital, the capitalist, or capitalism are each frequently denounced as the arch-enemy of labour, the oppressor of industry, the cause of unemployment and poverty. In this

connection it is interesting to note what the great apostle of this theory, Karl Marx, had to say as to the origin of capitalism. He wrote: "The starting-point of the development that gave rise to the wage-labourer as well as to the capitalist was the servitude of the labourer. . . . The expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant, from the soil, is the basis of the whole process."<sup>1</sup>

Marx here seems to get a glimpse of the truth, for, as we have seen in this inquiry, "capitalism," or the control of large aggregates of capital by a few, began and grew when and as land was enclosed; and people driven from the countryside to the towns without any alternative employment there engaged in a one-sided competition for the jobs that were too few to go round. Such a situation provided an opportunity for the capitalist producer, and he took advantage of the cheap labour provided by the growth of land monopoly. This process was much intensified in the eighteenth century at the time of the Industrial Revolution. The workers were driven off the land by wholesale methods of enclosure into the arms of the industrialist, who was enabled thereby to produce cheaply and on a large scale, for, having no alternative employment, they had to accept his terms or starve. These workers were frequently worse off than slaves, for the capitalist had no need to take any thought of their physical welfare, for, for every one who fell by the way, there were several clamouring for admission at the factory gates, and so he ground the last ounce out of them.

*17. Capitalist has no power to oppress in absence of land monopoly.*

But just as one millstone cannot crush the grain without another stone to crush it against, so the capitalist could not have crushed the worker until he had been driven off the land and denied access to Nature's opportunities for employment by land monopoly—this was the other millstone. Unless, therefore, there was this other millstone, the capitalist would be powerless to oppress.

While the worker still had access to land, and so an

<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, p. 739.

alternative occupation, he would not have worked for the capitalist for less than he could make when employing himself ; and the capitalist would have been, and would still be, powerless to oppress labour if there was no crowd of unemployed clamouring at the gate for the work which the capitalist is supposed to be good enough to "furnish." It is not in the nature of capital to oppress. Capital, the instruments of production, that part of wealth which is used to produce more wealth, is the creation of labour, and should be its servant, not its oppressor ; but when capitalism appears as an oppressor of labour it is because of the monopoly power it derives from land monopoly, the mother of all monopolies.

Karl Marx seems to have appreciated this, but afterwards mistook the result for the cause ; and most of his present-day followers do the same, and ignore, or do not know, what he said as to the origin of capitalism. If expropriation of the people from the soil, or land monopoly, gave the capitalist the power to oppress, the thing to remove would surely seem to be land monopoly, the millstone without which the capitalist could not grind labour.

### 18. *Over-population and unemployment.*

There are also many supporters of the theory that over-population is the cause of unemployment. It will be remembered that the question of over-population was first mentioned in the sixteenth century, when the beggars were crowding into the towns ; and Harrison, writing in the reign of Elizabeth, referred to those who said there were too many people. In 1607 <sup>1</sup> there was the "Consideration" of the House of Lords, which stated that the country was over-populated, and that the surplus should be shipped off to the Colonies.

Throughout this period, when over-population was supposed to be the cause of poverty and unemployment, we have seen that opportunities for employment existed in abundance for those who were supposed to be surplus, but access was denied to them. The over-population argument would not have appealed to the English cottier or the Scotch crofter who saw his holding, from which he had been making a living, given over to sheep or deer.

<sup>1</sup> Chapter X, par. 8.

This theory again flourished in the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the great enclosure movement was in full swing and the towns were becoming over-crowded at the expense of the country-side. But at that time again, as we know, there were more than enough opportunities for employment for all the population. We have also shown clearly that opportunities exist in abundance at the present time, and this being the case, it seems to us to follow from the principles of the co-operation of labour that the greater the population, the greater should be the production of wealth per unit of population.

But although the country as a whole is not over-populated, it is clear, nevertheless, that the towns are over-populated as compared with the country-side; and certainly to one of the unemployed at the factory gates it must seem that if there were fewer people he might stand more chance. But while there are opportunities in plenty from which labour is barred there cannot be over-population. If this country contained two men only, and one of them owned all the land and had no need of the labour of the other, and refused even to give him permission to use the land, the country would be over-populated.

### 19. *Land monopoly and speed of increase of the population.*

It would, however, appear to be the case that land monopoly has been the cause of population increasing faster than it would have done under conditions where labour had easy access to land. Population seems to increase slowly where wealth is more widely distributed, as it was in England between Saxon times and the Black Death. After the Plague, when a greater population was required to ensure the maximum of well-being, population increased for a time very rapidly. The more rapid increase from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, and the very rapid increase during the latter part of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, coincided with the reduction of an ever-increasing proportion of the "commons" to paupers and under-paid workers. A large body of men was coming into existence that had little hope of rising in the social scale or of achieving any form of independence.

Driven from the land, these men crowded into insanitary hovels, where disease took a heavy toll of infant lives, and their whole life was one weary struggle for subsistence, with no opportunity of rising. When man is thus kept down in a condition resembling that of the lower animals, with no opportunity of developing those gifts which the animals do not possess, and with no opportunity of raising his standard of living, he, like the animals, multiplies quickly. If wealth were more equally distributed, as it would be if all had access to land, a class such as we have described would not exist, and it seems clear that the economic check of a rising standard of life would bring about a much slower increase of population.

## 20. *Currency manipulation and unemployment.*

Another alleged cause of unemployment frequently put forward is currency manipulation, but with this, as with other ills from which the inhabitants of this country may suffer from time to time, it is difficult to see how it could cause unemployment as long as labour had free access to land. It seems to us that the exponents of these various so-called causes of unemployment all err with regard to the same vital point, namely, in entirely disregarding how wealth is really produced and what are the factors necessary for its production. Labour may be robbed in many ways, but as long as access to land with security of tenure is unrestricted there need be no unemployment.

## 21. *Machinery and unemployment.*

Again, labour-saving machinery is sometimes blamed for causing unemployment, and we can see that this may be so for a time if the labour "saved" has no opportunity of obtaining any alternative occupation. The saving of labour effected by such machinery should, of course, benefit every worker by enabling him to obtain more wealth with the same labour or the same wealth with less labour than before ; but with a surplus of unemployed and under-employed this advantage tends to be lost through the one-sided competition for work and the denial of access to land. It is because labour is denied access to land that the average worker is



distrustful when he hears of new labour-saving machinery; he has come to think that the unemployed surplus must be always with us, and he regards work as of more importance than the results of labour.

## 22. *The Trade Cycle.*

The phenomenon known as the Trade Cycle, that recurrence of industrial depression and a maximum of unemployment at intervals of about ten years, is regarded by some as natural, and necessarily resulting in unemployment, as, in fact, the cause of unemployment. The proposals of those who support this theory all centre on schemes for making the best of an unfortunate but inevitable state of affairs, by insurance and State regulation of industry and the labour supply. An acceptance of the Trade Cycle explanation of unemployment is an acceptance of the theory that prosperity continued for a time results in poverty and unemployment. The Trade Cycle undoubtedly exists, and the supporters of this theory of unemployment accurately *describe* one side of the picture, but fail to disclose any causal connection between the various phases of the cycle. They do not explain how a manufacturer of boots, for example, can have produced too many boots when thousands of people need another pair and are able and willing to work. Again, looking at it from the other side, they do not explain why, when human wants are insatiable, demand should apparently diminish as long as men have their labour and there is access to the raw materials of Nature to enable them to satisfy their wants.

One side of the picture is, however, omitted in descriptions of the Trade Cycle. During the period of prosperity which precedes collapse and stagnation, there is enormous speculation in land, in the source of the raw material of all wealth. Men buy and hold for a rise in confident expectation that they will, in the near future, make a handsome profit. It is this very process of land speculation during a period of good trade which gradually strangles production by making it harder and harder for labour and capital to get access to land. The price which labour and capital have to pay is forced higher and higher, until the limit is reached, and further production

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is impossible. This cessation of production at some points means a lessening of purchasing power. The effect of this is felt throughout the industrial world, leading to collapse and subsequent depression until a lowering of rents and a fall in land values makes production again possible.

### 23. *The remedy.*

Now that we have ascertained the cause of unemployment the remedy is clear. The land monopoly must be broken down, and labour must be afforded free and equal access to all land, so that it may be possible for a man to supply his own demands for goods by producing directly from the land, by linking his labour with the opportunities which the land provides. This might be brought about by a gradual resumption by the community of the rights over the land which undoubtedly they formerly possessed, and a change in the basis of taxation and rating, so that instead of industry being penalized, as we have seen it now is, and a premium put on the withholding of land from use or keeping it in an under-used state, industry would be freed from penalizing taxation, and the penalty fall on him who withholds land from labour. Such an adjustment would make it unprofitable for anyone to withhold land from use or to keep it in an under-used state.

Just as a high protective tariff acts as a wall round a country to keep out a large proportion of foreign goods that in the normal course of trade and exchange would come in, so the land monopoly acts as a tariff protecting the interests of the owners, the monopolists, and keeping out labour. The monopoly must be broken up, the tariff wall demolished, and labour given the access which it is now denied.

### 24. *Results of the destruction of land monopoly.*

The forcing of land into use and the relief of industry from the burdens that now oppress it would have the effect of very rapidly absorbing the surplus of unemployed. It would not, of course, be necessary that all, or even nearly all, should go on the land as farmers, for the breaking down of the barriers which now shut off labour from the land would not only stimulate the industries which extract wealth directly

from the land, but also village industries and all forms of manufacturing, transport, and exchange. Production in the building and allied trades would be directly stimulated by rendering sites easily available and also by cheapening the production of all building materials; and by giving labour access to all minerals, production would be stimulated in industries requiring those minerals. There would also be the greatly increased demand for manufactures set up by those who would now be working directly on the land.

But there is little doubt that a large and increasing number would become small holders. If, for example, 500,000 men took small holdings, this would account for some 2,000,000 souls and only 5,000,000 acres of land if each holder took 10 acres; and there is little doubt that less than this would be needed if the land were farmed co-operatively in village groups. In fact, with small holdings on any considerable scale, farmed on the co-operative system, it would probably be found that something in the nature of the open-field system would prove far more economical and productive.

These 500,000, then, would not only be supplying their own demands for commodities, but would also have a considerable surplus to exchange. This surplus would in turn set up a demand in the industries supplying the goods they required, and thereby increase employment in those industries. It would be exactly the same as if a new country had been discovered, with a population of 2,000,000, all with a real demand for the products of our industries.

**25. *State ownership of capital unnecessary. Industry after the breakdown of land monopoly.***

It is misleading in the extreme to say that some unemployment is necessary in order to carry on the modern capitalist system of industry. Some unemployment is, of course, necessary if the capitalist is to continue to oppress labour by taking advantage of labour's extremity, but there is no reason why industry should not be carried on quite well without the capitalist having this power, which he would not have but for land monopoly and the surplus of unemployed. It is not necessary for the State to take over capital in order to deprive him of this power.

It is probable, however, that under the social system which would arise out of the break up of land monopoly industry would tend to become more and more decentralized as the balance between agriculture and the manufacturing industries became redressed. The industrial village would become once more a feature of the country-side, and the villages of Great Britain would be more cheerful and comfortable places to live in than many of them now are.

**26.** *Development of the "home market." Human wants unlimited in number.*

This breakdown of the land monopoly and the opening up of natural opportunities to labour would develop the "home market" in the only way practicable by giving all the opportunity to work and produce wealth, which would stimulate to an enormous extent home industries to meet the increased real and effective demand at home. With the relief of industry from the crushing burden of taxation, and the removal of the dead hand of landlordism, production would increase by leaps and bounds to meet the steadily increasing home demand.

Although each individual want is satiable, wants are *unlimited* in number, for as soon as one want is satisfied another arises. As soon as quantity is satisfied, a desire for quality arises, and so on. Man is the only *unsatisfied* animal. Human wants do not increase and then diminish or cease altogether, and if every man has the opportunity to satisfy his wants, demand must remain steady. At the present day, should foreign demand for a British product fall off, unemployment may result, but with alternative opportunities of employment provided by the throwing open of natural resources, and the competition among employers of labour, there would be no need for this. Moreover, the home demand would be greatly increased by reason of the fact that many previously unemployed would now have an *effective* demand for the products of other industries.

**27.** *The end of one-sided competition. The opportunity of employment for all.*

This opening up of the land to labour would then have the result of putting an end to the *one-sided* competition under

which workers compete for jobs but employers seldom compete for workers. This form of competition is so prevalent that it has come to be regarded as typical of competition in general—of real competition. But with Nature's opportunities for employment thrown open to all, the number of potential employers would be greatly increased, and the greatest of all competitors for labour, *the demand of labour itself*, would have come into the market. Then for the first time for nearly 500 years there would be *free competition*—a competition which would give to each the full product of his labour, neither more nor less.

Under such a system, where every man had access to land with security of tenure and no one had the power to levy a toll on him before he could employ his labour, no man need ever be unemployed. It is only by the abolition of land monopoly and the relief of industry from taxation that this result can be brought about, while at the same time preserving individual freedom.



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